Week ending May 18 1957
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by C. S. FORESTER

BEST FOOT FORWARD
by Colin Hodgkinson

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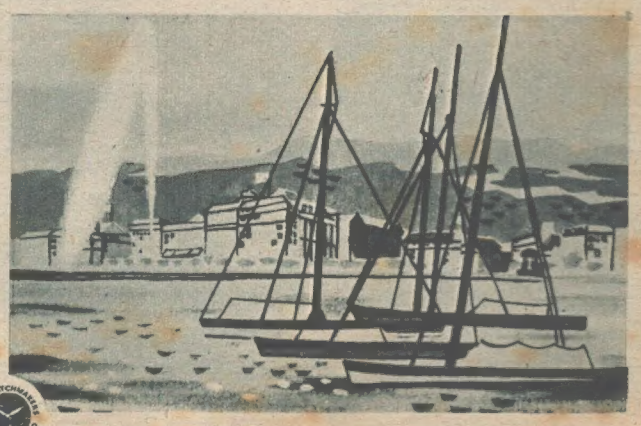

Swiss Federation of Watch Manufacturers

JOHN BULL

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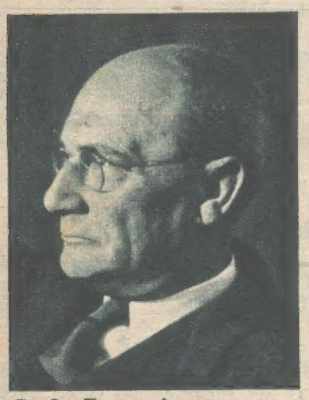

C. S. Forester's new story came as a surprise to him

CECIL SCOTT FORESTER has come a long way from the Peckham Road library which he recalls in *Hornblower's London* (beginning on page 18). "Here I am," he says, "writing on a Californian hilltop, with San Francisco Bay spread out in grey and silver below." Success, both by reputation and income, has come to that avid young book-worm from South London.

And yet even now, at the age of fifty-seven, with thirty years of best-seller writing and forty-two volumes to his credit, Forester is still surprised that plots for new stories keep coming to him. He is hardly willing to take responsibility for his latest serial, *Hornblower and St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, which will begin in JOHN BULL next week. "This story," says Forester, "just drifted into my life unasked. Hornblower does this every so often, but he hasn't yet outworn his welcome."

At one time Forester never wrote more than a thousand words a day, but now he relies on his ability to write quickly to give him more leisure. "As a result," he says, "I became the first man to think of the two-day week."

In fact, Hornblower has done much for Forester's peace of mind. While on a writing assignment with the U.S. Navy during the war, Forester was struck down by arteriosclerosis. Hornblower came to his rescue. "He helped to make my life a pleasant one, and I am always glad to see him when he drifts in.

"I haven't walked more than fifty yards at a stretch for fourteen years, but fifty yards is enough with careful planning." And he doesn't have to move at all to wander—in his imagination—down the Peckham Road again.

TWICE a week, Colin Earl, a 6 ft. 5 in. cartoonist with an explosive laugh, rises at 6 a.m. "Unfortunately," he says, "that is the only time of the day that I can think up jokes."

Earl became a cartoonist by chance. He began studying commercial art during an illness at the age of eleven. After nine years as cartoonist to the Wolverhampton *Express and Star* he threw up the job—on the strength of selling one cartoon to a national magazine—and set off for London with a portfolio of drawings. "A month later I was broke," he says.

That was three years ago, and Earl went home to Wolverhampton ready to ask for his old job back. But his father lent him more capital and by the time Earl reached London again the cheques for his first sales had begun to arrive.

Today he produces about thirty finished cartoons a week—his latest appears on page thirty-one—and shares an office with his wife, Muriel, who runs an artists' agency. They met while she was secretary to his first London agent, but it wasn't until after their marriage two years ago that they realized that she had sold the cartoon which first brought Earl to London.

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Free Speech

- **Judging men by womanly intuition**
- **Are cows good barometers?**
- **Outdoing the "do-it-yourself" bores**

I USED to think that it was feminine intuition which helped me to judge most men's characters correctly the first time I met them. Now I know that it is the subtleties of dress and behaviour which give them away.

My subconscious mind gives out little warning signals if a man holds his cigarette in his cupped hand as though he were eating an apple (secretive?); keeps his hair too short (military-minded?); has grubby fingernails (messy in his habits?) or hands that are manicured too well (vain?).

I also avoid men who wear little badges in their buttonholes, or club ties too ostentatiously (fear of being alone?). But the most irritating of all are those who make some perfectly reasonable attacks on women in my presence and end lamely: "Present company excepted, of course" just when I am about to launch a counter-attack.—MISS GERALDINE MINTON, Hampstead, London, N.W.3.

Mystery Ship Mystery

It isn't surprising that Commander Douglas Duff refers to the mystery ship found drifting crewless as the Marie Celeste ("Strange Tales Of The Sea," JOHN BULL, April 6), for this mistake is now virtually universal. The actual name of this famous ship was the Mary Celeste.

I knew well a man whose father was the first to board her when she was discovered. — W. P. G. ANDERSON, Innerleithen, Peeblesshire.

Traffic In Knots

Many people who are tired of traffic jams on roads to the coast, and of the commercialism of many popular seaside resorts, are now turning to rivers for their holiday fun. But I hope this doesn't mean that Britain's waterways will eventually become as congested as her roads.

The Thames Conservancy is already erecting name plates and route indicators, and if the present trend continues perhaps it will be necessary

to install traffic lights and put river police on point duty at the busier stretches.—R. A. FRANKLIN, Linden Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex.

"We already have a form of traffic light," says the Thames Conservancy. "It tells approaching skippers which of the busy locks to enter at Teddington. Last year was a peak one for Thames pleasure craft, particularly canoes. There were 7,900 small pleasure craft registered, including seventy extra sailing boats and forty-eight more dinghies. Motor launches totalled 3,780—an increase of 150."

Hailing The Hunted

Whenever prisoners escape from Dartmoor I find that as I read reports of the intensive searching of the moors my sympathies are invariably with the man on the run. And my admiration increases the longer he evades the overwhelmingly superior forces which are hunting him. My family and friends indignantly deny sharing my anti-social attitude. I wonder whether this is peculiar to myself, or whether it is fairly common, stemming from the normal British feeling of sympathy for the underdog. — R. PLATT, Sheldon, Birmingham.

Weatherwise Cattle?

Our farmer neighbour sometimes grazes his cows in a field adjoining our garden. Yesterday the milkman said: "Cows lying down—sign of rain," and the baker said: "Cows lying down—sign of fine weather." When the farmer collected the cows

at milking time we asked him to settle the matter. *He* said that it was a sign of contented cows.—MRS. M. GIBB, Rowledge, Farnham, Surrey.

"There is little evidence that birds and animals can foretell the weather," says a naturalist. "Cows often lie down to reserve a dry spot if there is rain in the air, but they usually do it merely because they want to rest and chew the cud."

Not Well Suited

JOHN BULL'S topical cover illustrations certainly reflect the trends of the times, and Batchelor's Easter wedding cover (April 20) is no exception. It shows the bride in a full-length white gown and the bridegroom in a lounge suit.

How prevalent this male discourtesy is today! Twenty-one wedding photographs, in my local newspaper last week showed seventeen brides in white but only three bridegrooms in formal dress.

No . . . I'm *not* an old fogy. I'm still in my twenties and was married less than a year ago—in a morning suit.—R. G. SPENCER, Feathers Lane, Bridge Street, Chester.

Three-handed Time

The letter from C. F. Maw of Nottingham ("Free Speech," April 20) reminds me of a family I knew which carried time-cheating to extremes. Father liked the clock half an hour fast; the son thought a quarter of an hour was fast enough, but the mother preferred the correct time. So the son fitted two extra minute hands at angles to the real one—an arrangement which satisfied the family but baffled uninitiated visitors.—MRS. S. WHITTON, Melsonby Avenue, Park End, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire.

. . . I have a friend who deceives himself about time by deducting the six war years when putting his age on any document. He says that these were compulsorily taken from him, but as he was left none the worse for them and no older in spirit he is entitled to disregard them.

I wonder whether he will have the same view when he becomes legally old enough to draw his pension.—R. L., Devonshire.

Undo It Yourself

These "do it yourself" experts are an admirable band, but they can't resist boring people with detailed descriptions of how they did it. I grew so tired of this at my club that I decided to outdo them all.

We have just moved house, so I described how we found that the bedroom wallpaper was more suitable for the living-room. My leg-pulling story of how I changed the papers from one room to the other was quite an epic. It still has some of my listeners puzzled.

And I am no longer troubled by interminable descriptions of their lesser accomplishments.—P. D. C., Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

Putting On Record

Since reading the article describing Bristol's hospital broadcasting service ("A Tonic In Their Ears," JOHN BULL, December 29), I have recorded four programmes for it.

I will be glad to record similar programmes for hospitals in other parts of the country to which my travels take me.

Perhaps other readers in the theatrical profession would care to do likewise and so help this very deserving cause.—DEREK ROY, B.11 Du Cane Court, Balham, London, S.W.17.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

THE COVER

WHAT a way to start the weekend: bunkered before he's played a stroke! By the time the small change is sorted out from the collection of ancient score-cards, pencil stubs and tees in his pocket, that train will have a nine-hole start. Cover artist Fancett says that a golfer should have known better than to take his eye off the ball—or the clock. But he reckoned without this player's heaviest handicap—a weakness for a pretty smile. Now it looks as if there's going to be a little flag on that manly chest instead of another Captain's Medal.

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The perfect Miss Twill

by N. J. CRISP
ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENT

She was certainly full of bright ideas. No doubt this latest one would cost him his job

MR. PARKINSON was irritable and nervous. Even the busy ringing of the cash registers failed to soothe his jangled nerves. His eyes settled with dislike on a neat figure efficiently correcting a knitwear display.

"Miss Twill!" he bawled across the store.

Miss Twill took rather longer to turn round and walk towards him than he liked. If he had thought it would have done the slightest good he would have had some pretty sharp words with the personnel department about her. They knew perfectly well that he liked male executives in his store. He didn't mind the occasional departmental manageress; they were sometimes young and tolerably ornamental. But to send him, after fifteen years as a top store manager, an assistant manageress instead of an assistant manager was, he felt, almost a calculated insult.

Unfortunately, Mr. Parkinson knew that Miss Twill had a bright and growing reputation in the company. He also knew that his own

"Are you aware," he asked, "that the Chief arrives in something under one hour?"

position was far from secure. He had a strong suspicion that he was being softened up and that, when he was deposed, Miss Twill would be conveniently ready to step into his shoes.

"May I inquire, Miss Twill," he asked with sarcastic courtesy, "whose bright idea it was to start dressing a complicated window style during my lunch hour?"

"Mine, Mr. Parkinson."

"Are you aware that the Chief arrives for his tour of inspection in something under one hour?"

"The window will be finished before he arrives."

"You do know that, should you be wrong, should the Chief," Mr. Parkinson said, warming up, "happen to get here when the window is in pieces, I shall, tomorrow, be out in the street playing the banjo, while you hold the begging bowl? You do know that?"

This was a mode of address which Mr. Parkinson found rattled his staff excessively. He had a theory that they worked better when they were rattled fairly frequently. *He* didn't, of course, but other people did.

Miss Twill, however, regarded him calmly, almost with amusement.

"At my last store," she said, "the Chief was rather taken with a similar display which I worked out."

Mr. Parkinson looked away from her down the long sweep of the store. The counters stood in sentinel rows; every display had been checked; the terrazzo floor shone; dresses hung immaculately from their racks; every one of the girl assistants wore a clean nylon overall: the very air smelled of immaculate cleanliness. He couldn't think of a thing that he had overlooked. But there was bound to be something, and he knew that the Chief would find it.

"The most important thing, Miss Twill," he said, "is the question of the tea break. Is that properly organized?"

"Yes," said Miss Twill.

"I merely hope——" Mr. Parkinson began. He broke off as he saw a homburg hat bobbing towards him above the flow of shoppers. Switching on a confident smile, he strode forward, hand outstretched. "Felix, my dear fellow, how delightful to see you again," he said, with something less than accuracy. Felix Wiatt was the Chief's personal assistant, and Mr. Parkinson preferred his absence to his company.

"The Chief will be here in thirty minutes," Wiatt said.

"Splendid," Mr. Parkinson said, his stomach dropping to the floor. He glanced over his shoulder at Miss Twill, who had now climbed into the window and was helping the window-dresser. Thirty minutes!

"I expect you could do with some refreshment," he said, guiding Wiatt away from the unfinished window.

Wiatt was too old a bird to be caught that way. "Bit late in the day to be trying a new window," he said casually.

"Miss Twill's idea," Mr. Parkinson said, shamelessly shifting the blame.

In his office, Mr. Parkinson poured out two whiskies, sank his immediately and poured out another. It seemed not to have the slightest effect.

Wiatt hung up his hat and coat, sat down and studied the glass sombrely. He said: "We've known each other a long time now."

Mr. Parkinson was familiar with the portent of such an opening. He said weakly: "We started in the company together, you and I."

"Yes. That's why I felt I ought to give you a word of warning." Wiatt raised his long, white face and stared at Mr. Parkinson. "The Chief," he said quietly, "is after your scalp today."

Mr. Parkinson felt his insides begin to shrivel. "Sales in all departments are up," he protested, "above the company average, in fact."

"You may recall," Wiatt said, "that one Saturday afternoon the Chief was on his way to the south of France. Before going to the airport he called at your store, unannounced. You weren't here."

"The only Saturday afternoon ever," Mr. Parkinson mumbled. "There were urgent personal reasons. . . ."

"The Chief," Wiatt went on, ignoring him, "thinks that you were playing golf."

"Good Lord, that was six months ago," Mr. Parkinson said weakly. Mr. Parkinson remembered that he had gone round in seventy-eight. He still had the medal at his flat.

"The Chief has a long memory."

In the silence that followed, Mr. Parkinson reflected that this no doubt explained why his hard-working, unambitious assistant had been replaced by the efficient Miss Twill.

"Of course," Wiatt said, "it's not so bad for you as it might be for some. You're not married, you've no dependants. I expect you'll get something else fairly easily."

Mr. Parkinson rebelled at that. "You sound as if it's all cut and dried," he said pugnaciously.

Wiatt waved long fingers in the air. "That isn't *quite* true," he said. "In a sense, the Chief is a sportsman. He plays strictly according to the rules—his own rules, of course. If he can't find any fault the whole thing will be forgotten. But. . . ."

He didn't finish the sentence. He didn't have to. Mr. Parkinson was reluctantly aware that the Chief knew more about running a store than any store manager alive. There wasn't a store in the country that he couldn't rip to shreds.

"There is just one hope," Wiatt said. "He's an unpredictable old——" He checked himself hurriedly. "I mean, of course, that he will forgive a manager a great deal if he has any new ideas. Have you got a fresh approach to any of our problems?"

Mr. Parkinson dredged hopefully, but could find nothing.

"He will, of course," Wiatt said, "be as interested as ever in display, store procedure and cleanliness. But the main thing will be service. All customers must receive quick attention. All departments must have maximum staff on duty at peak periods. Have you got that covered?"

"I think so," said Mr. Parkinson cautiously.

"You'll have to do better than that." Wiatt looked around him, and dropped his voice, though the room was empty but for themselves. "The Chief has chosen this day, I can tell you in confidence, because he knows that there is a procession timed to go past the store at four-fifteen. People will line the streets to watch. As soon as the procession has gone by they'll break away and come into the store in droves. Your tea breaks will be on. You'll be understaffed, and it will look bad. Now you understand I'm telling you this——"

"I know all about that," Mr. Parkinson interrupted, feeling just for the moment rather smug. "The tea breaks have been altered. Every girl will be on duty from four-fifteen onwards."

"With three girls on each of the front store counters?"

Mr. Parkinson nodded.

It was nearly impossible for Wiatt to smile, but he practically managed it. "There appears to be a faint chance," he observed, "that you might be here next week after all." He looked at his watch. "We'd better go down."

Miss Twill's window was finished, but Mr. Parkinson had no time to study it, for just then a Rolls-Royce silently drifted up to the store and the tubby figure of the Chief alighted.

Mr. Parkinson said, his arms at his sides: "Good afternoon, sir."

"Let's get on with it," the Chief snapped. He stopped by the new hat window and glared

"Hallo, my dear," said the Chief. "What

at it as if it were a growth of noisome weeds. "What's this?" he demanded.

Mr. Parkinson hesitated. It hardly seemed sporting to throw Miss Twill to the wolf. It was Wiatt who said: "A new idea of Miss Twill's, sir."

A horrid contortion disfigured the Chief's face as he turned to Miss Twill. "Very nice, my dear," he leered. Mr. Parkinson realized that the old tyrant was smiling.

He watched with jealous fear as the Chief patted Miss Twill in what was no doubt a fatherly fashion.

The pattern was now clear. Miss Twill was the favoured one. He could expect no help from her. He drooped despondently, feeling that the afternoon was to be no more than a painfully extended execution.

Then anger took hold of him. To hell with Miss Twill! He was determined to see this thing through and beat the old man at his own game.

These reflections took him but a moment or two. It was too long.

"Normally, no doubt," growled the Chief acidly, "you have all the time in the world in which to do nothing. Just now, would it be

is your fastest selling colour in cardigans?" The girl shook her head. "I don't know, sir," she said, "because I'm usually on clocks and watches"

asking too much for you to stop daydreaming?"

Mr. Parkinson felt the prickle of redness in his cheeks. He took his place in the procession. The Chief led, followed by Wiatt, himself and, finally—a feminine fifth column—Miss Twill.

The stockroom was the first stop, followed by the offices and the staff canteen. Mr. Parkinson felt like a man desperately trying to halt some vast, overwhelming natural catastrophe with his bare hands. The Chief pried, probed, snapped questions and got down on his hands and knees to peer into some corner where he thought a speck of dust might be lurking. And each time it was the same. Anything that could be attributed to Miss Twill was satisfactory. Everything else called forth a grunt or a scowl.

It was in the corridor between his office and the staff room that Mr. Parkinson paused thankfully, while the Chief examined with pride a photograph of himself which hung on the wall. He glanced idly out of the window into the street below, and his mouth dropped open. He looked at his watch, shook it, held it to his ear. It was ticking, cheerfully and reliably.

Mr. Parkinson looked again into the street. Below, foreshortened by height, a close-packed mob of people was parting, opening like some dark flower of doom. They moved, in crowds, some up the street, a few down, but the majority drifting out of Mr. Parkinson's range of vision—into, he realized, the store.

He studied his watch again. A quarter to four. The procession had gone past half an hour early. Most of the girls were still at tea break.

Into Mr. Parkinson's bemused mind a vision came. He saw the sales floor invaded by a seething mass of people, choosing their merchandise, holding it up in the air, crying irritably for service. He saw the few remaining salesgirls, bewildered, near to tears, desperately, inadequately trying to cope. With both himself and Miss Twill missing from the sales floor he saw the bright, gleeful eyes of the shoplifters as they leisurely selected their pick.

He groaned, and then—that was it. . . . Miss Twill! She could sidle off, get some girls down on to the floor before the Chief got there.

He turned huntedly, searching. Wiatt said: "Lost something?"

"No. That is—Miss Twill. . . ."

"She went off somewhere," Wiatt said. "Having some tea, I think."

Mr. Parkinson could hardly believe that such treachery could lurk in any human breast, even Miss Twill's.

"It's going remarkably well," Wiatt said cheerfully.

Mr. Parkinson felt like a limp and dirty dishrag. Going remarkably well, indeed! If the Chief got one glimpse of the chaos on the sales floor he might as well empty his desk drawers and go and sign on at the local Labour Exchange.

The Chief turned. "Now we'll see the sales departments," he said.

"No," said Mr. Parkinson.

The Chief scowled. "What was that?"

"The stockroom," Mr. Parkinson babbled. "Interesting new development——"

"Rubbish! We've seen it." The Chief turned towards the stairs.

Mr. Parkinson risked a look at his watch. Eleven minutes to. Twenty-six minutes to go. "The roof!" he shouted desperately. "You must see the roof."

The Chief stopped. "What the hell for?"

"Pigeons."

"Pigeons?" The Chief stepped near to Mr. Parkinson, his eyes glowing redly. "Are you

Continued on page 32

Favourite aunt to the lost ones

by NORMAN PHILLIPS

With five hundred unlucky children to care for, Mary Miller aims to bring new happiness into broken homes

Miss Miller (with spectacles) at a foster mother's home. Three hundred people applied for foster-parent vacancies in her area

Children's visitors confer with Miss Miller. Their first task is to keep a home together. They will plan the family's budget—and lend money if necessary

OUTSIDE the children's nursery at Stannington, Northumberland, nearly five years ago, two bewildered brothers and their sister scrambled out of an official car. The oldest was four, they had no home of their own, and their parents were separated.

Officially, the Green children were beginning a new life "in the care of the local authority." In place of parents they had the county Children's Officer, whose name is Mary Miller.

Less than a month after their arrival, Mary Miller found the Greens a new home with foster parents willing to keep the three children together. She arranged for their own father to meet them regularly. Last year he remarried. As soon as he finds a house, Miss Miller will return his children and mark down the Greens as a successfully re-established family.

As Children's Officer for Northumberland, Mary Miller is responsible to the council's children's committee for nearly five hundred unlucky children. Some are youngsters whose parents have neglected, ill-treated or abandoned them; others need only temporary shelter during a domestic crisis.

A professional social worker who looks and is a favourite aunt (she has eleven nieces and nephews in her sister's family alone), Miss Miller is one of the 145 Children's Officers in England and Wales. Their pay ranges from £750 to £2,750, according to the size of the authority employing them, and they protect the interests of nearly 65,000 youngsters whose parents cannot, or will not, look after them.

Children's Officers step in to prevent families breaking up, trace fathers and mothers who have disappeared, find foster homes for youngsters of different creeds and colours, and care for deprived children aged between only a few hours and twenty-one years.

Northumberland has about 123,500 children under eighteen. Only 3.9 per 1,000 (the national average is 5.3) are in the care of the council. Mary Miller has found foster homes for nearly seventy per cent of these (the average for England and Wales is forty-five per cent).

With a staff of ten visitors to help her, Miss Miller makes her first objective keeping a family together. On one occasion she learned from a member of a local housing committee that five children were about to lose their home because of their parents' inability to pay off long-standing rent arrears totalling £3 17s.

At first the family would not believe that they were going to be evicted. Miss Miller sent a visitor to convince them that they would find themselves on the street if the money were not paid that day. Once evicted, it would have been almost impossible for them to find another home within their means.

The father went out and borrowed the money. "If necessary," says Miss Miller, "we ourselves would have lent it to them."

The mother and the visitor worked out a new budget that has not only allowed the family to pay off its debts but also to redecorate their home. And the children will probably never know how close they were to coming under official care.

Late one evening the police called Miss Miller to report that a woman with eight children was sheltering in an abandoned brick kiln. Miss Miller sent a visitor to the kiln and then called children's homes in the district, warning them to expect visitors. By two in the morning, the mother and her children had been found beds.

The father was found and warned of his responsibility to the family. He promised to try to look after them. One of the visitors knew of an area in the Midlands where he could find work. The man went there, found a job and a place to live. As he became established the members of his family, two by two, gradually rejoined him.

IF a family cannot be kept together, the Children's Officer tries to place the children either with foster parents, or in a small home where eight to twelve children are looked after by a house-mother. In each case the aim is to meet the child's individual needs and plan for his future.

One local authority helped a boy in its care to become a doctor. A Midlands children's committee made it possible for one of its girls to get an Oxford degree.

In Northumberland, to give deprived children this individual attention, Mary Miller depends on her visitors and more than 250 foster mothers.

The county's residential nursery, which once housed twenty-four babies and toddlers, has been turned into a home for the blind. When it was decided to close the nursery more than three hundred would-be foster parents volunteered to take children. Each was investigated. One lonely applicant admitted she could

Three-month-old Vicky is in a foster mother's care only until her own mother is well again

Children's visitor Miss J. Balls shares a joke with Peter (seven), Jane (two) and David (five)

not make up her mind between a cat, a dog or a foster child, and others boasted of their success with stray animals as a qualification for handling children.

The obviously unsuited were weeded out quickly. Successful volunteers had to pass two or three interviews, supply three references and submit to chest X-rays.

One of Miss Miller's foster mothers, Mrs. Clark, has cared for twenty-two different children in the past four years. (Clark is not her real name because Miss Miller does not want youngsters in her care to be branded as "home" children.)

The Clarks moved from a flat to a suburban house so that they could take more of Mary Miller's foster children. At present, in addition to their own ten-year-old daughter, the Clarks are parents to Barbara, eleven; her brother Donald, two; and to David, a three-year-old.

David was two when he was abandoned at an orthopaedic hospital. No one ever came to see him. The doctors decided to call in Miss Miller.

Tracing the parents was not difficult. Children's Officers form their own information service, and a colleague in Manchester provided Miss Miller with a report on David's mother. Her marriage had broken up and she had no interest in her child. The father, living in another part of the country, said David only reminded him of an unfortunate episode in his life.

From her list of foster parents Miss Miller selected Mrs. Clark as likely to give David the affection he needed. A short, grey-haired woman who makes friends easily, Mrs. Clark went to the hospital to meet David for the first time.

Miss Miller arranged for David to make several visits to Mrs. Clark's home. By the time he moved into the home, David was looking forward to becoming one of the family.

At the Clark's, David met Donald, who was less than a year old when his mother deserted her husband and three children. An affectionate man, Donald's father at first refused Miss Miller's offer to help and tried to keep the home together with the help of neighbours.

Without the father's consent, Miss Miller was unable to act. Eventually, he gave up his job to look after the family, but the worry made him ill and he sought Miss Miller's aid.

Mrs. Clark took the baby Donald, but Miss Miller did not have a foster home suitable for Donald's older brother and sister. She placed them in one of the small children's homes.

Designed for about eight children, these small "homes" are now built on housing estates and there are no signs of anything that would set them apart from the surrounding council houses. A house mother and father are in charge, and one of the rules for house mothers is that they should not make a fetish of tidiness.

Holiday allowances are paid to children in care, whether they are in foster homes or children's homes. In one area an enterprising group of youngsters in a small home earned enough money from doing outside chores to stretch the council's allowance into paying for a holiday in France. In Birmingham, a group of boys who are under the supervision of the Children's Officer are planning a summer cycling holiday through Northern France.

Most of Mary Miller's foster children have seaside holidays. Until recently boys and girls who were leaving school and about to start work were sent on a trip to London. This has now been changed to a week's stay at a holiday camp.

A Lancastrian who has made a career of social work, Mary Miller studied at the London School of Economics and began family case work in Liverpool. Later, she went to Yorkshire to help handicapped people and then, during the war, joined the Ministry of Health to look after the welfare of evacuee children.

Tommy, aged fourteen, is not related to Jane (two), but he treats her like a sister in their foster mother's home

Working with evacuees roused Miss Miller's interest in the problem of children deprived of their homes.

It was late in 1948 that Mary Miller arrived in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to become Northumberland's first Children's Officer. Legally, the post was created by the Children Act of 1948; in fact, the existence of Children's Officers is a memorial to a boy named Dennis O'Neill.

On January 9, 1945, twelve-year-old Dennis died in the home of foster parents at Bank Farm, Minsterley, Shropshire. His death was due to "acute cardiac failure following violence applied to the front of his chest and back while in a state of under-nourishment due to neglect."

Dennis's foster parents were jailed (the man for manslaughter; the woman for neglect). Sir Walter Monckton held a special inquiry into the circumstances preceding Dennis's death.

While Sir Walter investigated the O'Neill case, a committee under Dame (then Miss) Myra Curtis began examining methods of caring for deprived children. The work was then spread between the local authorities' health, welfare and education committees. The report of the Curtis Committee became the basis for the 1948 Children Act, which set up children's departments to take over all matters affecting youngsters under official supervision.

Under the terms of the new Act, Northumberland pioneered the policy of trying to prevent families from breaking up. Frequently Miss Miller gets foster mother allowances for aunts, sisters or grandmothers so that a child can stay with relatives.

If everything else fails, Mary Miller's foster mothers provide a substitute home. A little more than a year ago, one of them lost her husband. She was so attached to her foster children that Miss Miller made special arrangements to let them stay with her. The decision was taken in the interests of the children, who would have been upset by a transfer to another home.

Recently word reached Miss Miller that this widowed foster mother had an unusual request. She was thinking of marrying again. The man in question was agreeable to acting as father to the foster family. Would the children's committee approve him?

"If he doesn't qualify as a foster father," declared the widow, emphatically, "I won't marry him."

THE END

BEST FOOT FORWARD • 3

I go snooping–and meet disaster

by COLIN HODGKINSON

High over enemy territory I twisted and climbed on a daring mission. Then my engine died . . . and I plunged earthwards

Colin went on his first "Rhubarb" with a fiery more than three hundred miles an hour, they blew

To the rhythm of the engine I growled the phrase over and over again. "Nothing to offer you but blood and sweat, toil and tears. Toil and tears, blood and sweat." Eleven thousand feet below was the Channel, grey as pewter under the wintry sun. Ahead was the coast of France.

It was February 3, 1943, and I was flying my first operation over enemy territory: one of seventy fighters taking twelve Ventura bombers to the marshalling yards at Abbeville. This was what I had dreamed of for three years, the moment for which I had given my second leg.

An accident on a training flight just before the war cost me my right leg, and had so damaged my left leg that flying—or any happy life—seemed impossible. Then, in hospital, I read of a pilot named Bader who, with no legs at all, was flying against the enemy. What was impossible for a man with one unsound leg was possible for a man with no legs—or, rather, two tin ones.

So I took my decision—and had my remaining leg amputated too. Then, after weary months of self-discipline and wangling, I got into the air again. Since I could not go to sea, I transferred from the Fleet Air Arm to the R.A.F. I achieved my overwhelming ambition—to fly a Spitfire. And now I was on my first operation over enemy territory.

Around me the sky was reassuringly full of Spitfires. Above and a few yards off to the left the wing and belly of Yellow Leader—my No. 1. Beyond him the rest of 610: Red and Blue sections, each with its four aircraft staggered in a supple "Z." We were at the bombers' height, their close escort. Eight thousand feet above, providing medium cover, the Biggin Hill squadrons, 611 and 341. As high again, winding out their vapour trails at 30,000 feet, were the high cover squadrons from North Weald.

Sun to port—about eleven o'clock: that's all right. Another look at 341 up there. They *are* Spits, aren't they? R.T. silence, nobody will tell me if they're not. Engine sounds sweet enough—2,250 revs. Oil pressure O.K. Something glinting above at three o'clock. Relax: only a scratch on the hood.

Mid-Channel now and, God, what a lot of water! Turning in a wide sweep starboard and I've got too close. Ease the throttle, stick a little forward to get shaken out. Important thing is to keep formation. My No. 1's still lolling up there, his airscrew turning lazily. But what a beauty she is, the Spit! She doesn't fly, she lives through the air.

Look out now: coast close ahead. Crawling surf. Crazy paving, grey-green and russet; the sun sparkling on a window. That's France. I'm sweating, the back of my neck prickles. Does one ever get used to this?

More water, that's the Somme. And there's Abbeville—there. Engine? Oil? Both still O.K. Nothing behind, but my neck's aching damnably. Turn port. Port still. Abbeville's behind. Hell! the bombing's over. I've seen nothing. No smoke, no fire. No enemy.

The Channel again ahead. England in sight. Lovely England. Spits breaking right and left like startled birds. Going down. The Isle of Wight. Saliva coming back.

Here's the field; into the circuit to land. Good landing, anyway. Count the Spits—eleven; all there. I taxi right up to dispersal; I'm allowed to do that because of my legs.

"No fun, sir?" This from the rigger as I climb out.

"No fun, Rigby." He can see that I haven't fired by the canvas patches on the gun ports.

That evening I printed carefully in my log book: "Circus 259. Close escort. Twelve Venturas bombed Abbeville marshalling yards. Swept Boulogne-Abbeville area. Nothing seen."

My first operational squadron had been 131 Squadron, but in a month with it I flew only four operational patrols: harmless local excursions up and down the south coast. Then the squadron, due for a rest, was ordered to Scotland. This didn't suit me at all. I hadn't reached the R.A.F. at last to be relegated to a back seat.

At the risk of upsetting Fifield, the squadron commander, I went to see him. Could he possibly arrange for me to stay on, if not in this group, at least in the south? I wondered if he would understand about my legs, the absolute necessity to me of proving myself in action.

But Fifi, happily, understood at once. His squadron was being relieved at Tangmere by 610, an Auxiliary Air Force squadron commanded by the famous "Johnny" Johnson, D.F.C. and Bar. My transfer went through painlessly, and when the new squadron arrived it found me waiting. I had done twenty Spitfire hours under Fifi's command, of which four were operational. Under his last signature in

Jack Charles (left) and René Mouchotte, who commanded the French at Biggin Hill, shared in shooting down the sector's thousandth victim

Biggin Hill had the latest aircraft, famous pilots and great prestige. Colin was in a flight commanded by Johnny Checketts

Irishman named Paddy Small (left). Flying low, at up a huge petrol tank and wrecked three trains

With Johnny Johnson (right), Colin visits Arthur King, who gave parties for Tangmere pilots at his public house. After one of these Colin withdrew from a flight. His replacement was killed

the log book I found that he had scrawled "Good luck, Hoppy!"

Johnny Johnson had flown with Douglas Bader in the Tangmere wing, and understood the psychology of the legless. Fit as an oak himself, he divined the mental effect of chafing stumps and ill-fitting harness. He neither coddled nor cursed; he inspired.

Johnny was tallish, athletically saturnine and wore habitually a wide but thin-lipped smile—a sort of caustic beam. The first thing you noticed was his speech; it was clipped in a high voice and somewhat hoarse. He used seemingly nonsensical but somehow meaningful and impelling catch words, a strictly private jargon as characteristic as the little jerks and twitches of his head.

"Erse! Erse! Hoppy! Is it about?" was often Johnny's way of saying good morning. Johnny didn't give you orders, he invited you to take part in some exciting conspiracy. In the air he was magnificent as leader and pilot—he came out of the war as Fighter Command's top-scorer—getting the best out of his squadron without the urgent, staccato shouting which was often apt to scare a greenhorn.

Under his command my total of operational flights increased rapidly. During the first few weeks at Tangmere I was impatient to get into action. I had yet to prove myself to myself. On a fine, cold and cloudless morning, I got all the action I wanted. The wing was taking a box of Mitchells briefed to bomb Poix Aerodrome, near Amiens. As the Mitchells queued up for their run, a voice came in: "Forty plus bandits climbing from the south-west."

Tommy Thomas, leading the wing that day, said laconically: "O.K." Then silence again.

South-west. I peered out alertly in that direction. But I saw no enemy; it was eerie, no one appeared to be disturbed. Then I saw a bomber go down, cartwheeling slowly with one wing gone, brick-coloured flame oozing from the belly. A parachute opened like a white bubble.

Johnny's voice, impossible to mistake: "Going down. Going down."

I turned on my back to follow the squadron, but I was far too late. I looked round wildly, seeing nothing but an empty sky and the earth coming nearer, scribbled with smoke. I had lost my No. 1, lost the squadron, lost myself. This was what they had warned me about, this happened to all tyros. Never get isolated. Never leave your No. 1. But if you're alone in a dog fight, then turn, turn, turn.

I pulled up brutally and turned tight, tighter, too tightly—"greying out" for a moment. As the blood returned and I rose back in my seat I saw them: four Focke-Wulf 190s to port and above.

They flipped over and came straight down past me, wings winking tracer in white cords which fizzed past my tail. Missed!—and the first moment of panic had gone.

The headphones were a babel: oaths, exclamations, warnings. Confusion, but a discernible pattern. Some pilots knew what they were doing; were fighting together, helping each other. No one was helping me. I pulled the stick back to my stomach and started my idiot turning.

Finally, bemused and dizzy, I saw two Spits formating and I climbed up to join them.

The squadron lost two Spitfires; Johnny, as usual, got a Hun.

After we had landed Johnny approached me: "Hey, Hoppy, what about a drink in the town tonight? You on, eh? We'll go and beat up Arthur."

Arthur King was proprietor of The Unicorn in Chichester, with the idea that he had been brought into the world to serve, coddle, advise and generally spoil the "Fighter Boys" of the Tangmere wing.

On one occasion he was the indirect cause of saving my life. I forget the excuse for the party. Johnny was there with most of the squadron and the bar was packed. After closing time Arthur invited a few survivors to stay on. "Got some special bottles," he said, "prewar. What am I saying? Pre-*Boer* war." And indeed they were good; old whisky, old brandy, also a peculiar hunch-backed bottle of what tasted and smelled like old rum. On this last I concentrated.

WHEN we got back some three hours later to Woodcote Farm—the house on the edge of the aerodrome where we had our quarters—there seemed no good reason why the party should die. There was drink, mainly beer, but the fire was out and the night very cold.

We were not in a state to let this be an excuse for going to bed. We set about groping around for wood. But the only wood in sight was the banisters up the wide stone steps which led to the floor above. They were old and looked temptingly inflammable. Within minutes they were torn out and providing a splendid blaze.

Round this we sat for another hour, drinking mulled beer and singing ribald songs. Then I remembered that it was very late and that I was due to fly on an operation in a few hours' time. This was quite a big show: 150 Flying Fortresses were to bomb Brest; it was the squadron's job to meet them on the other side and bring them back.

Briefing we were told was at 8.30 a.m. It was now nearly three. I gave an expansive good night and rolled towards the stairs.

At that stage of my progress in walking I could get up stairs without using banisters, although I preferred them to be there. There was no doubt that I needed them now. All went well until I had got nearly to the top when, losing my balance, I slow-rolled sideways and outwards, clutched wildly at where the banisters should have been and fell like a log some nine feet to the floor beneath.

The next thing I remember was Johnny's satanic grin as he leaned over my bed shaking me to the sound of engines running up on the aerodrome. "Hoppy! Hoppy! Scramble! Is it about? You're on the do today, you know. Can you make it?"

I certainly couldn't make it, as one glance must have convinced him. He told me not to worry. He would find someone else.

But I did worry. I felt deeply, helplessly ashamed. I slept on till well after lunch time, got up and immersed my head in cold water and dragged myself over to dispersal. One look told me that the show had gone wrong.

Someone told me the story. One of the squadrons had failed to rendezvous. Ours, just as it reached the French coast, had been jumped by a force of about fifty 190s. Four Spitfires were shot down: Yellow Three and Four, and Blue Three and Four.

I went over to the blackboard where the detail of the day was written up in chalk. Against the column "Yellow 3" I read the name F/O Malton. It was printed over the lightly scrubbed out but clearly distinguishable letters of my own. He was never heard of again. . . .

Fairly quickly I lost that first feeling of utter bewilderment in battle. But I still had an obsessive fear of flying over water.

On one occasion this nearly led to my making an utter fool of myself. We were flying high when, just as we were crossing into France, I was shaken by a series of sharp explosions in the bottom of the cockpit. *Jumped!* I thought grimly, and immediately took evasive action.

For a few seconds I twisted and turned, scanning what I could of the sky. Nothing: no 190, no yellow-barbed Messerschmitt—only the squadron flying impeccably on. More explosions; terrifying, louder than ever.

Flak? It must be flak. I banked steeply and

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Daughter of Greengarth

My heart bled for the poor lass. It was not enough for her to be in love—not when she was up against her father's bitterness

As long as I live I shall never forget that day. Not that anything very startling happened on the day itself. At two o'clock in the afternoon there was the sale of Spoutbank, a poor, tiny spot scarcely deserving to be called a farm. But what it led to fairly shook the dale.

I left home only a few minutes beforehand, Spoutbank being on the other side of the road and nearly opposite. As I walked up its lonnin, I looked at the small, sour fields bordered by stone walls in a bad state. There were about twenty acres of so-called pasture, a miserable yellow-grey after a nip of frost.

The house, swart and poky, had nothing to recommend it. The rest of the property was valueless, a sugar-loaf of a hill, which we call a how, jutting up a couple of hundred feet between the back of the house and the river. In area at least twenty acres, it had grown into a jungle of whins. With brambles and dead brackens they rioted up all sides to the very top. There a hollow snout of granite some ten feet across stuck up through the sparse soil.

Everyone knew Whin How would be useless until that jungle got cleared away. For several years it had been getting worse, because old Torver, owner of Spoutbank, was too ancient and tired to bother about it.

In the ordinary way a thousand or twelve hundred would have been a fair price for the spot. But there were complications. Sandwiched between Greengarth and Cubbinsyke, it offered a modest extension value to either of them.

If the owners of those farms had been sensible folk, they would have made a private arrangement. Instead, we knew, there was going to be a battle royal.

Generations back some stupid thing, such as the forebear of one cheating the forebear of the other over the buying of a Herdwick tup, had started the squabble. Ted Lorton of Greengarth and Bill Hird of Cubbinsyke were not even on speaking terms.

I'd always thought that was a pity. I liked them both and found them decent chaps. But there it was. They were bound to fight like cats over the sale, to the benefit of old Torver, of course.

Quite a crowd gathered there that afternoon. I saw Lorton and his daughter Nance. Lorton's thin, pale face with its thatch of sparse grey hair was taut and unsmiling. That hardly surprised me. But what seemed queer was Nance's expression. I had known her since babyhood, and a fine, attractive lass she had grown up to be, slim and graceful and sensible, with a lovely smile that could suddenly shine out through her usual quietness. Just now she had a tension about her almost bordering on fear. I could understand her being anxious for her father's sake, but this was something beyond reason.

I waved to the pair of them, and called: "Good luck," and Nance relaxed for a second and smiled back. Towards the other side of the crowd stood Hird with his son, Jimmie.

The auctioneer stepped up on the rostrum—a farm-cart—and the buzz of chatter died down. First of all he spoke praise of Spoutbank in the typical auctioneer's fashion until some of us were laughing aloud at the absurdity of it. Then he got on with business, and there were just the two bidders, Lorton and Hird.

Lorton started with five hundred, and they went up in fifties to a thousand. Lorton was getting paler, except for an angry flush on his cheek-bones. Hird, a younger man with brownish skin and dark brown eyes, had a kind of relishing grin.

They kept at it, and in the hush between bids you could hear the gurgle of the distant river, though it was at low ebb. Now and then Nance jerked unhappily at her father's sleeve. He took no notice.

Spoutbank reached twenty-one hundred before Hird chucked in his hand. He was still grinning, in a sick, angry fashion. As for Lorton, the look on his face was murderous.

I came away from the sale feeling excited by the battle and a bit sorry at the same time. The fells were in one of their benign moods, the sky a pearly-blue, the brackens a shining copper, the granite crags a glistening pinkish-grey, and down below a cloud of fieldfares called cheerily as they swooped from spinney to spinney.

The bitterness between those two men seemed pitiful in the face of all that calm and permanent beauty.

That was the Thursday. On the Sunday afternoon, about an hour after dinner, I noticed that a tup I had bought at the Hawes sale was missing from the home field. It had a habit of straying, and I reckoned it had jumped the wall backing on to the skirts of the fell where some cam stones were missing. Among the scattered trees behind the wall were a few laurel bushes. If it got at those it might poison itself and bang would go £25.

I went through the gate in the stackyard and along the trod edging the skirt of the fell. It was spongy here with moss and that accounted for my silent footsteps. I passed a flanking hummock, and without any warning came slap on Nance Lorton and a young man. They were sitting on a boulder, holding hands, and as they jumped up I could scarcely credit my eyes. The young man was Jimmie Hird.

I said, "Hallo."

Jimmie nodded and gave me a quick, worried glance. He was a clean, lean, open-air sort of lad. But for the gulf between their parents I could have picked no better partner for Nance than Jimmie.

It was a matter of two being company and three none with a vengeance. I smiled again and hurried on. As I did so I heard them talking in low, urgent voices, and then the sound of somebody running after me.

It was Nance. She said: "Please, please, you'll keep this to yourself?"

"Aye, of course I will."

Her eyes thanked me. She was plainly on edge. I tried to reassure her with an affectionate grin. "Not a word. Don't you worry."

It was easy advice to give, but privately I reckoned that the pair of them must be feeling like hunted prisoners, for the bush telegraph in our dale misses nothing. Of course, being of age, they could have gone openly about their love-making if they had chosen to break with their own folk. But Jimmie was mighty fond of his parents, and Nance adored her widowed father.

She made that clear to me a couple of days later. I was down in Tarn Ling, my last field towards the village, erecting larch posts that would take a wire running well above the top of the wall. The ewes would be down for lambing in a month, and they had a trick of jumping this section of the wall and then straying in the road.

Nance came along. She smiled, hesitated and said: "I expect you were surprised on Sunday."

"Aye, that I was."

She drew an unsteady breath. "If only Dad and Jimmie's father would patch up their quarrel. . . ."

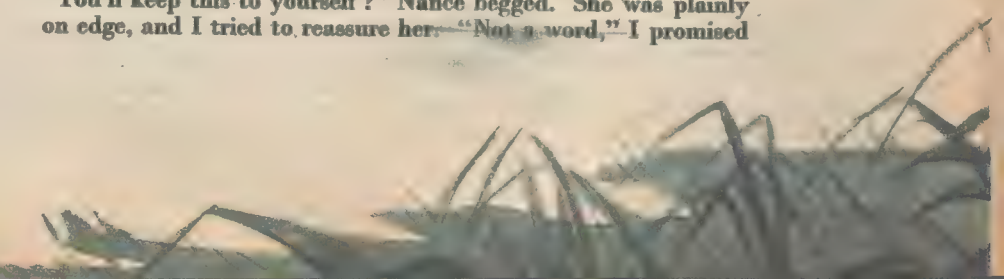
"I'm afraid, my dear, 'tis a case of if only pigs could fly."

She nodded, her mouth drooping. "Dad's so kind and decent. I just can't hurt him. But I won't give up Jimmie." A steady, golden gleam shone in her eyes. "I won't."

I patted her shoulder. "That's the spirit. You're young, with your lives ahead of you. 'Twould be a wicked shame to let this stupid old quarrel come between you. Yet I fear you'll have to choose either yourselves or your parents."

Her mouth quivered. "It seems so. Anyway, they needn't know yet. We couldn't be married for a while."

How on earth they were managing to hide their secret defeated me. Anybody who has lived in a quiet dale knows how everybody's business is common knowledge down to the



"You'll keep this to yourself?" Nance begged. She was plainly on edge, and I tried to reassure her. "Not a word," I promised

by DUDLEY HOYS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN HESELTINE

veriest detail. But hide it they did, for I met Lorton on the road the following week, and he stopped for a crack. He talked about Spoutbank, and that led him on to his opinion of the Hirds. It was vicious.

"Vermin," he said, "that's what they are, all of 'em."

I made no comment His blue eyes, which could be calm and kindly, had a frozen glitter. "Nance feels t'same as me. She never even mentions the name of 'em. We'll have no truck wi' folk like them."

I said, "Aye?" and came near to sweating. If only he knew, if only he knew. One of these days he was going to find out and, blindly stubborn as he might be, my heart ached for him as well as for Nance.

The dry, cold spell with a touch of east wind was outstaying its welcome. We needed rain to bring on a peep of young grass for the lambing in April.

On a bright but biting afternoon I was muck-spreading on the home field, which slopes up towards the skirt of the fell. Nance's problem was in my thoughts. I had seen her in the morning, on the way down to the village to spend the day with a girl friend of hers.

Glancing across the road, I spotted Ted Lorton beyond the Spoutbank house. He was walking in the direction of Whin How in an old woollen overcoat he sometimes wore if cold wind threatened his croupy chest. In one hand he carried a tin and in the other something that had a wispy wad on the end of it. That, I knew, would be a length of stiff wire, topped by a ball of rag, and the tin would contain tractor vaporizing oil.

I told myself he had chosen the right day for

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Who's been enjoying my Dari-Rich ...?

Half an hour ago...

Mum left an open box of Dari-Rich around. Dad started it all. Couldn't stop himself— practically went the whole hog. Then came Anne; she couldn't resist that truffle. Enter Tom, and that put paid to a nutty one, "just one". Who can blame them— buy a box of Dari-Rich and watch your family fall!

I ate the truffle

I'm a soft-hearted creature.
I like chocolates that just melt away.
All smoothness and gorgeous flavour.
Coffee and strawberry creams,
montelimart, Turkish Delight.

I ate the nut log

I'm a hard man to please. I like
a centre you can get your teeth into.
Caramels, cracknels, all the crunchy kinds.
Plenty to chew your way
through in a box of Dari-Rich.

I ate the whole top layer

(While the others were being so choosy!)
I don't know how they make that Caley
rich milk chocolate, but I know why they
call it Dari-Rich. Really makes you think
of fresh creamy milk. Makes you think?
Not likely. Makes you eat!

¼ lb 1/4 ½ lb 2/6 1 lb 5/-

DR348

Enjoy the dairy richness in Caley Dari-Rich

A. J. CALEY LTD, NORWICH

The 1946 Bordeaux to Britain pigeon race. Flying with the wind, pigeons have reached speeds of 92 m.p.h., but their flights are unpredictable

Champions in the sky

by PETER JACKSON

Thomas King gives his racing pigeons a flying start. They may fly home at top speed—or cross the Atlantic on a ship

Two aged lorries careered along a rough mountain road in northern Spain late one summer evening in 1953. The Basque drivers shouted with excitement as they accelerated down the steepest gradients and ignored their brakes at precipitous corners. Thomas King held on to the passenger seat of the leading lorry and wondered how the ride was affecting the two thousand valuable racing pigeons he was taking to San Sebastian.

When the first lorry pulled up suddenly, King thought that it had done so to allow him to soothe the birds. But the driver only grinned when thanked for being so considerate. "I happened to notice through my mirror," the man explained, "that the steering broke on the lorry behind. It has run into us, which is better than crashing over the edge at the next bend."

King found the pigeons unharmed and muttering busily in their baskets. After roadside repairs, the journey was completed safely. Next day he released the birds to fly home for the King George V Cup—the Derby of pigeon racing.

"Losing a lorry-load of the country's best birds down a mountainside would have been a £75,000 disaster," says King, a short, sprightly South Londoner. As chief convoyer for the National Flying Club, he spends his summers providing one-way transport to the Continent for pedigree pigeons worth up to £500 each. For £5 a day, plus expenses, he takes them by air, sea, rail and road to some of the loneliest spots in Europe. Then he throws open the baskets and lets the birds make their own way back home. Once his return journey overlapped with that of the pigeons. As he leaned on the rail of a Channel ferry he saw a group of stragglers sheltering from a strong headwind by flying just above the ship's wake.

The 1953 trip was King's only visit to Spain. He took the pigeons by freighter aircraft to Bilbao, on the understanding that military transport would be provided to reach San Sebastian by road. When he unloaded 165 baskets of pigeons, he was offered four army mules. Instead he hired the two lorries, and received a bill for £80 at the end of the journey. King had only £25, mostly needed for hotel accommodation. He spent several restless days confined to the town under police supervision, until a Spanish bank clerk offered to lend him the money. When King asked why he was taking such a risk, the clerk said: "But, señor, I trust you as a brother. I keep pigeons, too."

King returned home and the loan was duly cleared. "I might have ended up in a Spanish

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Once, when King (second from left) freed his pigeons, he saw them fly across an airliner's path

Hornblower's London

by C. S. FORESTER

Memories crowd the city streets for the creator of fiction's greatest sailor. Men went hungry—and a prince rode on a tram

College Road, Dulwich, near the Common, is the prettiest street in London, says Forester

IF you cross the river, heading south from the West End of London, you enter immediately into the unfashionable half of the city. The South London streets which lead you away from the river are drab, one might almost say ugly—I would say so myself if I had not been brought up there.

The fortunes of war settled that I should be born in Egypt, but, while still a child, I came from Egypt to South London and passed my formative years there, adapting myself perforce to an incredible new society where men employed on such manual tasks as house painting spoke English and only laughed at my Arabic.

To me, all those streets, from Kennington to New Cross, from the Elephant and Castle to Sydenham, are full of memories, even though remarkably little of historical importance happened there.

On Kennington Common one or two of Bonnie Prince Charlie's supporters lost their heads (I cannot tell you why that particular place was chosen for the horrid exhibition), and Karl Marx lived in Camberwell while he wrote *Das Kapital*, and then you come to Peckham, where nothing happened at all, except that the mystic William Blake once saw an angel in a tree on Peckham Rye.

Peckham is a vast area of brick and slate houses in undistinguished streets. The wave of building that rolled out from London washed over this part in the 1870s and 1880s, and certain areas of it might be slums now if it were not for the determined efforts of a paternal government. Otherwise, any one of its streets is exactly like any other, save to the eye of someone like myself, who spent his childhood in one of them and can remember the very flagstones in the pavements. Peckham Road is the main route of communication east from Camberwell Green. There I would spend my Saturday penny, and—much more important even to my infant mind then—go to change my books at the public library.

There is no library there now, for it was bombed in the last war. That is not to say that there is no library in the borough; there is a very attractive one with a window alluringly filled with the coloured dust-jackets of the current attractions. This new library is something quite different from the pompous building in mosaic and imitation marble where I used to borrow books. The imitation marble building availed nothing against Goering's high explosive bombs, and for some reason no new library has taken its place yet in Peckham Road.

It is now nearly fifty years since a small, white-faced boy, so thin that he looked half-starved (and tactless aunts used to ask if he had enough to eat), used to stagger along Peckham Road with his arms full of books. He was the youngest of a family of five, and he had a father and mother too, so that he had seven library tickets available for his own use. Now I come to think of it, you could have separate tickets for fiction and non-fiction, so that I used to make use of fourteen tickets altogether.

Nearly every day I carried an armful of books—a double armful—round to the library, and another double armful back again, to read during long enchanted afternoons and evenings, oblivious to the frequently violent activities of the older members of the family. No periodic drunkard was ever as far out of this world, or as steeped in pleasure, as I was during those bouts of mine. I can remember losing myself, enchanted, in the endless volumes of Gibbon's *Decline And Fall*, which subsequently became the favourite reading of one Horatio Hornblower. I can remember the vistas which opened up as I turned each new corner of the magic garden of romance—unending vistas of Wells and Kipling and Conrad, the beauty of each vista enhanced by pride of discovery, for the lonely and self-centred little boy that I was did not stop to think that the rest of the world was also reading Wells and Kipling.

Yet the endless volumes and the unending

Forester at the gate of the Croydon house where he lived as a young writer. His early books were written in South London

King George V and Queen Mary—then Prince and Princess of Wales—leave the first electric tram to run in London. The Prince rode on the top deck, "raising his glossy silk hat to the crowd"

As a boy Forester spent his pocket money at this corner sweet shop in Peckham Road

vistas were not endless or unending. There came a time—I must have been every day of ten years old and perhaps as much as twelve—when I had read every volume in the library once at least, if not two or three times, except for the volumes on music and philosophy.

Save for the place where the library stood, Peckham Road is strangely little changed from those days. The sweet shop where I spent my Saturday penny, and the shoe repairer's and the chemist's, still stand side by side at the corner of the street where I used to live. On the opposite corner the chapel still stands, and along the road between the chapel and the library was—and is—the fire station.

Peckham Road in those days (and I suppose now to little boys not yet in their teens) was a wonderful place. It was incredibly noisy; the steel-tyred wheels of the carts rumbled like thunder over the granite setts and macadam, and the trampling of the horses added to the din. The horses added considerably to the dirt as well, for, on a rainy day, the vast hoofs of the dray horses, coming down ponderously into the puddles, would splash a loathsome mixture all about, sometimes as high as the upper windows.

There were horse trams when I first knew Peckham Road, but I felt a pitying contempt for the tram drivers who stood low, hardly above ground level, to drive their horses, as compared with the lordly bus drivers who sat enthroned on high, some feet above the vast rumps of their animals. But these horse trams disappeared quite early in the century, and were replaced by electric trams on the conduit system (it is only recently that these have disappeared). The electric trams were ushered in with tremendous ceremonial, which I can still remember.

I stood at the roadside there with thousands of other children to watch, believe it or not, a white state tram being driven with solemn dignity along the newly opened line.

It had—like the other trams—a roofless upper deck, on which stood (I can't help saying "believe it or not" again) the then Prince of Wales, later His Majesty King George V, with the Princess and five Royal children: the present Duke of Windsor, His late Majesty King George VI, the Princess Royal, the Duke of Gloucester and the late Duke of Kent, all in white sailor suits and all obviously delighted at the novelty of riding on top of a tram. Although, of course, they were preternaturally well behaved, they looked about them eagerly while their father stood patiently in his black frock coat, raising his glossy silk hat in acknowledgment of the hideous discords of everybody trying to sing "God Bless the Prince of Wales," which nobody knew.

Thereafter, electric trams sailed up and down Peckham Road, singing what, to a little boy, were magnificent melodies as they boomed along. At night time they were like great ships of light cleaving a way through the darkness.

But there was something else just as fascinating, and nearer, too. That was the canal just north of High Street (the north side was not nearly as fashionable as the south side), where Rye Lane, the Bond Street of that area, joins on to High Street and the Grand Surrey Canal comes to an end, unceremoniously, in an inconspicuous terminal.

Vast barges used to be towed by horses along the Grand Surrey Canal, filled with barley for the Bermondsey breweries, wheat for the millers and sugar for the sweet manufacturers, all brought by the big sea-going ships whose funnels crowded the docks.

One of the strange things about that canal was its loneliness, there in the heart of one of the most crowded areas in the world. The towpath used to be nearly deserted; there was a toll charge of one halfpenny for foot passengers using it—and in those days a halfpenny was a lot of money in the minds of other people besides little boys. I could wander along that towpath dreaming dreams, as if the canal and towpath and myself were enclosed in a glass case, outside which, visible and yet unable to influence me, were the tenements and the factories.

THE barges—lighters, not barges—came gliding over the black water, the only sound accompanying their passage being the slow "clop-clop" of the hoofs of the horses that towed them. Sometimes the bargee would walk at the horse's head, his face tanned to mahogany, almost to chocolate; but often the horses plodded along without other guidance than an occasional shout from the barge. Before the barge arrived the water would be like black glass; the surface would mount up in a slight unbroken dome before the advancing bows, then it would flow quickly back along the sides of the barge, and, when the barge had passed, the ripples of its passage would die away slowly to leave an unbroken surface again. But the ripples never died away in the mind of the skinny boy who watched those lighters pass.

There was only one untranquil moment that I remember along that canal. A group of small boys (I have the strangest suspicion that they had sneaked on to the towpath without paying their halfpenny, because, as I have said, the towpath was usually deserted) was playing by the path when a lighter approached from one direction and I from the other. The horse was unaccompanied, and one of the boys lit a fire cracker and tossed it under the horse's feet.

Tranquillity was shattered like soap bubbles by the bang of the cracker. The horse sprang into the air, he reared and he plunged, his four huge feet lashing out in all directions, and then he tried to bolt, bracing his feet against the earth for a convulsive bound forward. Brought up short by the towrope and the seventy-ton barge at the end of it, he tried again and again, leaping forward madly against his collar, each leap being translated into frantic jerks upon the towrope.

Things went on happening fast. The bargee ran forward along the barge from stern to bow and soared into the air in a prodigious leap (my memory assures me he leaped fifty feet, but my common sense tells me it was more probably five), coat flying and arms and legs working. He landed with a crash on the towpath and then ran forward to seize the horse's head and quiet him down, uttering what I knew by slight acquaintance to be filthy words, and yet in a soothing and pacific tone, in the oddest way.

Fifty years later (or a hundred years before, according to how you look at it) one Horatio Hornblower was involved in an adventure with a horse-drawn barge while on his way to take command of the Atropos.

The canal's farther end, as I have said, was rooted in the docks, and there, and in the Pool, and along the whole stretch of river down to Greenwich, was romance to set the imagination working feverishly. There were hundreds of ships, ships in fresh paint and battered old ships, working the strangest cargoes. Every possible flag was to be seen there, although the Red Ensign was by far the commonest.

There were flags that presumably will never be seen again, the old Russian merchant flag, emphatically not the hammer and sickle, and the flag of Austria-Hungary. I think it was only once that I saw (peering forward to make sure of it) the Stars and Stripes of the United States. The wildest dreams were dreamed, and the wildest ambitions sprouted there, and later some of the dreams came true and some of the ambitions were realized.

There are other isolated memories, some of them peculiarly poignant. Once—it was after I had started reading Kipling, and in particular his short story *Wireless*, with its description of the symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis—I saw a man in our road, turning the handle of a barrel organ. He was tall and thin, and to my mind he was handsome, despite his hollow cheeks. He had a big golden moustache like a Viking's, and as I looked at him he coughed, and then spat bright arterial blood on the kerb.

I knew what that meant, thanks to Kipling. I knew that this cadaverous figure, what remained of a fine man, was doomed to death within a few

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THE GOLDEN LANTERN

by THURMAN WARRINER

NEITHER Elva Peterson nor I could do a thing—we were too far away. Half-concealed by the sea mist drifting across Languish Island, the figure sprang towards Ollett. An arm lifted and smashed down, and Ollett pitched forward. And that made the second murder in twenty-four hours. . . .

My name is Mark Cradford. I'd arrived in the estuary town of Melhaven the previous night, in answer to a desperate plea for help from Warren Chalmers—a gilded playboy whom I'd no cause to love. Chalmers, who owned a Melhaven hotel, The Golden Lantern, had married my one-time fiancée, Vanessa. It was Vanessa I'd really come to help.

I couldn't do much for Chalmers, anyway. I went out to his yacht, Flirtation, with Elva Peterson, a lovely young girl I'd met soon after my arrival, and found Chalmers dead. . . . Inspector Watkins, of the local police, seemed to regard me as the principal suspect.

For my part I suspected Ross Malin and Joel Reardon, two men who were staying at The Golden Lantern. They seemed to have some strange hold over Vanessa. And then I began to learn things. . . . I discovered that Malin was a killer, an international crook, and that Chalmers had been running a large-scale smuggling racket.

Part of this information came from Commander Barnwell, a retired sailor who lived on Languish Island, across the river from Melhaven, and part from Elva Peterson. Her brother, Geoff, was serving a jail sentence for treason. She claimed that Reardon and others had tricked him into revealing scientific secrets of national importance.

It was then that we decided to have a talk with Ollett—Chalmers's handyman. We suspected that Ollett knew something. But that wraith-like figure got to him first, and struck him down. . . .

That night I accepted Elva's offer of accommodation—the cabin of her boat Swallow seemed safer than any hotel room. . . . I awoke with a start in the early dawn, to find the boat rocking violently. It was the wash of a big craft that had passed within yards of us.

"It's Flirtation!" Elva exclaimed. "But I thought the police had got her." We stood looking at each other while Flirtation disappeared round the bend of the river. . . .

FINAL INSTALMENT

Vanessa Refuses To Answer

WE had breakfast, but neither of us enjoyed the meal. We were too busy wondering what was going to happen next. I wanted to go ashore and find out why Chalmers's boat had disappeared from its moorings, but Elva said that would draw attention to ourselves, and I was beginning to respect her views. We should find out, she said, in time.

We did. About eight o'clock—approximately an hour and a half after we had seen Flirtation cruising towards the mouth of the river—she came back, more slowly. She passed close enough for us to see the heavily coated figure of Inspector Watkins.

So for purposes of their own, the police had taken Flirtation for an early morning trip. I couldn't imagine why.

"Elva," I said, "I want a closer look at Chanter's Wharf today. Then I'm going to see Vanessa again."

"I'll go with you."

"I don't want you with me," I told her, without any finesse.

She was fumbling in the engine well. She raised her head, looking at me calmly, rubbing her nose with her finger.

"Mark," she said deliberately, "I'm not going to let you throw your life away now."

I said: "Even people like Reardon and Malin can't get away with murder in a public place. But I'll compromise. I'll take you on the reconnaissance, and then you can come back while I go to see Vanessa."

We climbed on to the quay and got into the car. I told Elva that I wanted to reach the spur of high ground behind the hotel and the old lock basin, and she showed me a way that avoided the front of The Golden Lantern.

It was a clear, blustery morning. I pointed across the estuary. "That's the general direction of Languish Island. Aren't those the dunes?"

"It could be." She shaded her eyes. "If we were fifty feet higher, we could probably see the commander's house."

The grounds of the hotel were below us. They were deserted. The canal basin was full of water between the high banks of scrub and undergrowth. Elva plucked my sleeve and pointed.

"Isn't that Reardon's car at the side entrance? Someone's just driven it there from the garage."

We watched and waited. The trees of the wooded hill screened our own car, parked in the lane above, from anyone in the hotel grounds.

"That's the oldest part," Elva said, "the wing nearest the basin. It's a warren of rooms and corridors. That's where Hurwood will be. Look, someone's getting into the car."

I felt sure, even at that distance, that it was Reardon. And behind him was another man. "Malin?" I asked, and Elva nodded.

They drove out of the grounds and turned right towards the town. "I know what you're thinking," Elva said.

"It's the chance I've been wanting."

"Suppose they're back in ten minutes?"

"I'll risk it. Go back to town and wait for me in Swallow or somewhere not far away."

We drove back down the hill and I got out opposite The Golden Lantern's private moorings. "I'll give you an hour," Elva said. Her face was tense as she drove away.

I walked across the road and into the hotel. Nothing could have seemed less menacing than the quiet, well-ordered public rooms as I made my way through them, looking for Vanessa. But one of the first people I saw was Gribble, and that was a shock. The former barman at the Dolphin gave me an insolent smile.

I ASKED the clerk where I could find Mrs. Chalmers. He went away for about five minutes, then returned and led me into a beautifully furnished sitting-room on the first floor. Vanessa was waiting by the window, very pale, but more beautiful than ever.

"It's so nice of you to come and see me again, Mark," she said. "Do sit down."

I said without preliminaries: "I'm here now, Van, because I've good reason to think Reardon and Malin are out of the way. Not that I'm afraid of them, but I do like privacy when I'm talking to my old friends. I wonder if you've heard that Ollett's dead?"

Not a shadow of surprise, curiosity or concern showed in her face. "I'm sorry to hear that," she said. "When did he die? I didn't even know he'd been ill."

"His head was bashed in by a cold-blooded killer who followed him to Languish Island yesterday," I said.

She came hesitantly from the window. "But that's terrible, Mark—especially after Warren dying the way he did."

"That's what I thought—and there's a certain similarity of method that won't escape the

Gentle fingers were stroking my hair. "Mark," said a voice from far, far away. "Mark, darling. You're all right now. I'm here with you. It's me—Elva"

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

I'd pictured myself as a knight-errant. Now it looked as though I was the one to be rescued . . .

police. Did Ollett come here yesterday afternoon?"

"How should I know that? Why should he?"

"Perhaps he knew more about Warren's death than he chose to tell the police. Perhaps he came here and said so, and was quietened permanently, before he could tell anyone else."

"You're crazy, Mark."

"Malin killed Ollett yesterday afternoon. And it wasn't his first essay in murder."

"You're absolutely insane. Why, Ross wouldn't——"

"I know. Ross is the white-headed boy. I suppose you'd rather believe I killed your husband than credit him with it?"

She said, very slowly: "He can't be credited with it. Warren was alone on that boat and he was alive at seven o'clock. After that, Ross was with his wife and Joel and me till well after midnight. You're just trying to frighten me."

I got up and moved towards her. "Van, don't forget I know why Warren wanted me here."

Her eyes narrowed. "You said that when you came before, but I thought you were only bluffing."

"Warren was up against it, Van. Wasn't he? The copper racket was finished."

"Did you say copper?" said Vanessa. That

HORNBLOWER and St. Elizabeth of Hungary

C. S. FORESTER'S new serial begins in John Bull next week

had shaken her, just a little. "What do you mean? What do you know about our private affairs?"

I took a deep breath. "Never mind that," I said. "Where did you meet Reardon?"

"Oh, poor Joel again. In New York, years ago."

"How long has he been here in your hotel?"

"Since—let me think—last December or January."

"Why should he be here at all?"

She turned quickly. "Mark, I won't answer these stupid questions. Joel's been utterly kind to both of us, and especially so to me since Warren died. He's offered to stay on and advise me for just as long as I need. And his advice is worth having. He owns hotels himself—in Bermuda and Florida. I won't have him talked about in this way."

"Is he in love with you?" I asked.

"That's a terribly personal question, Mark. He's very fond of me."

"And you?" My mouth felt dry again.

"I like him very much. He's the kind of man I've always admired."

Vanessa went back to the window, and I wondered if she was expecting her friends back. If so, time was wearing thin.

"What about the Malins?" I asked. "Did they know Reardon before they came here?"

"I don't think they did. Ross came from South America."

"Another of these lucky people who neither toil nor spin?"

"Mark, how much longer do I have to endure this dreadful inquisition?"

I said: "Tell me one thing and I'll go. . . . What was your husband asked to do? What was the price of their silence about his copper transactions?"

"I know nothing about any copper," she retorted. "Not a thing. Are you satisfied?"

I shook my head. I felt baffled. I'd pictured myself as a knight-errant about to rescue Vanessa from some unspecified but unpleasant fate. It wasn't working out that way.

"One thing at least," I said, "keep what I've said to yourself this time. Go on blindly trusting Reardon and Malin if you have to, but keep this quiet. For your own sake if not for mine."

"Of course I will, Mark."

She put her hand on my arm, and as she did so I heard a car crunching over the gravel. I drew away from her. "You know where I'm staying," I said, "if you want me."

I GOT out of the room as quickly as I could. A couple of minutes to garage the car—if it was Reardon's. A minute for him to come back. It was a close call.

I went down an oak-panelled staircase and took a seat in a corner of the lounge. I hadn't been there for more than thirty seconds before they came in—Reardon walking heavily like an angry elephant, Malin slim and boyish beside him. I felt grateful for the other somnolent inhabitants of the lounge. They were better protection just then than a bullet-proof waistcoat.

Reardon opened the conversation. He said in a harsh, unfriendly tone: "I hope you haven't been worrying Mrs. Chalmers?"

I said: "I knew Mrs. Chalmers when you were dodging the draft in the States, Reardon. And when you, Malin, were taking care of your dirty yellow hide down in South America."

Reardon's gaze was thoughtful. "You're a very foolish young man," he said. "I think you ought to be taught a lesson."

Malin smiled gently. "I promised him one yesterday. I hope he hasn't forgotten."

"I don't know what reason Chalmers gave in his letter for wanting you here," Reardon said, "but I think it's time you were acquainted with the real reason, Cradford."

I waited for it.

"Vanessa and I were planning to leave the country," Reardon went on. "She'd asked Warren for a divorce. Did she tell you that during your conversation a few minutes ago?"

"She didn't," I admitted, feeling the sands shifting under my feet.

"One can understand that. She would be anxious to spare your feelings. But that's the situation. And Warren wasn't willing to divorce her, or to let her divorce him."

I said nothing.

"I was putting the screw on him, putting it on hard. Two of his concerns have been losing a lot of money these last few years. I came to the rescue just in time. I've owned this place six months, Cradford."

There didn't seem a lot to say. I could see now the way Vanessa was in his power. They must have got into pretty deep financial waters if Warren's crooked games had failed to pull them out. It had taken Reardon's millions to do that . . . and now he was exacting his price.

Malin cut in now. "So you'd better get out, Cradford, as soon as the police give you a clean bill. If they do. . . ."

"Also," I said, "I'm making a nuisance of myself to you and Reardon. Isn't that bothering you more than my relationship with Vanessa?"

Malin didn't answer. He just stood looking at me, his eyes betraying the killer's lust.

"I'm the curious type," I went on. "I'm curious about Ollett's visit here yesterday afternoon. And I'm curious about where the two of you went as soon as Ollett left you." I glanced over his shoulder at the club types and the old ladies who shared the lounge with us. Apart from them, I wouldn't have given sixpence for my chances of survival.

"I might ask you that," Malin said.

"I went to Languish Island, where I saw Ollett murdered."

It was probably the first time in his life that the wind had been taken clean out of Malin's sails, but it didn't take him long to recover. "So soon after Chalmers, eh?" he said. "Well, it's been quite a week."

I said: "When Ollett left here yesterday afternoon, you and Reardon headed across the river in his boat."

That was a long shot, but they must have thought that someone had seen them.

"We did," Reardon said. "Thought we might get a spot of fishing, but it turned cold."

"You're not saying that I killed Ollett?" Malin asked softly. "If so, you're crazy. You can't make it stick because there's nothing to stick. If there was, you'd be crazier still, because you wouldn't live long enough to make your will."

I got to my feet. "If I heard you say that in Berlin, I'd worry about it more."

I went to the door. I felt an unpleasant tingling between my shoulder-blades till I was out of range of the hotel.

There was a police car waiting on the quay. Elva was sitting in the back seat, with Inspector Watkins and the sergeant in front.

Watkins opened the car door. He said: "I'd like you to come to the police station, sir."

Melhaven police station was an unpretentious building in a narrow street behind the church. I said to Inspector Watkins, as soon as he had followed us inside: "Are we under arrest?"

"You should know," he said reprovingly, "that we have a prescribed formula for that sort of thing. You offered to make a statement."

I sat down and made it. In every detail it

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by Pete Collins

Heinrich could add, subtract, multiply —but he was hopeless at long division

Presenting . . . Heinrich, the toad who can count

He was an amazing act. "Seven!" I ordered. And that darn toad blew the whistle seven times

IN 1949, my search for material for my touring stage show, which features the most unusual acts in show business, took me to Cairo, where I watched the startling snake-charming feats of an Egyptian mystic. After stroking one particularly lethal-looking reptile and making it grow rigid, he proceeded to stuff it down his throat, head first.

Most Oriental miracle-men have one quality in common with certain local wines; they just won't "travel." I said as much to the old man who had arranged the private audition.

"If you are seriously in search of a miracle-man," he said, "I would advise you to procure the French Human Aquarium, Macnorton."

I had known all about Macnorton since I was a boy. He was once as much a part of the French scene as the Eiffel Tower. But surely he had long passed on. My road home, however, lay through Paris, and I called at the office of the taxation authorities to learn whether they had any recent record of him. They had.

Pont de Gennes, his home village, consisted of a cluster of villas and an inn. I called at the latter to ask to be directed to the Macnorton residence. In such a tiny place, of course, he would be a prominent figure.

"Macnorton?" said the innkeeper, blankly. "I have never heard of it. What is it?"

"It isn't a thing. He's a man, and he's very famous. He swallows live goldfish."

Roaring with delight, mine host bellowed: "Swallows live goldfish! Whoever heard of such a thing? What a comedian you are, monsieur."

The proprietor's small son, who had been listening to our conversation, said: "Monsieur Delair has many fine goldfish. He lives just along the road."

The innkeeper went into paroxysms of mirth. "Monsieur Delair no doubt swallows them, too. Yes, I can just imagine it. That dignified gentleman. . . ."

I left him at this point.

Monsieur Delair was pruning a rose bush in his front garden. I raised my hat and said without much hope: "Macnorton?"

The squat little figure straightened. "*Oui.*"

"My name is Pete Collins, of London."

"Ah," said Macnorton, in French, "I have been expecting you. Please come inside."

Then, raising his voice, he called: "Josephine! Mr. Pete Collins has arrived. Put on the kettle for some nice English tea."

Wonderingly, I followed him into the neat

In Collins's show *Hold Your Breath!* the artists staged an underwater tea party in a glass-fronted swimming pool. The men even "smoked" while submerged

Collins with Ted Evans, the nine-foot English giant, whom he took on an American tour

house and was presented to his charming, white-haired wife. Over the teacups I said: "How on earth did you know I was coming?"

Madame smiled complacently. "We have long known that Mr. Pete Collins and Macnorton, the world-renowned Human Aquarium, would one day work together. It was only a matter of time."

On the sideboard was a large goblet-shaped bowl, in which were swimming some two dozen goldfish. They seemed contented and not at all ill-used. Macnorton saw me glancing at them, and said with affection: "That is *ma famille*—my little family. I know every one of them by name."

I asked how he had conceived the idea of becoming a Human Aquarium.

It turned out that when he was a boy, little Louis Claude—for those were Macnorton's given names—was fishing with some friends on the banks of the River Loire. For hours he plied the rod with no success. At last, in comic despair, he cried: "If I catch a blessed fish, I'll eat it!"

At that moment a minnow came on his line. The other boys clustered round him, shouting: "You've got one—now swallow it! You said you would."

With youthful bravado, Louis Claude thrust the fish into his mouth, intending to keep it there and eject it at the first favourable opportunity. To his alarm it slipped down his throat. He was thumped on the back and stood upon his head; but the fish had gone.

Boy-like, the little group tired of the incident after a few minutes and went back to their rods again. Then, suddenly, the fish inside Louis Claude gave a jump. It was still very much alive! The boy opened his mouth to shout in fright—and the fish, propelled by his involuntary stomach muscles, shot high into the air and fell into the river, where it swam off.

It was not long before the enterprising youth had developed an easy, polished fish-swallowing technique. The circus ring and the music hall stage were but a step.

I was curious to know what had prompted the little Frenchman to change his Gallic surname "Delair" to the Caledonian "Macnorton." He explained that he was deeply interested in history. One of his boyhood heroes had been a swashbuckling gallant called Macnorton, a member of Mary Queen of Scots' bodyguard. So, when casting around for a suitably foreign-sounding name, that was the one he chose.

The routine of his act did not vary from his early days to the time in 1949, when he appeared in my show, *Well, I Never!* First, he would drink thirty or forty glasses of water without stopping. He could have drunk many more, but that was all that time allowed.

Then Madame Macnorton would say: "Any amount of dreenking means nothing at all to heem. He can dreenk from morning till night without stopping, because the phenomenal and extraordinary feature about heemself is that he can dispose of the liquid whenever he feels a leetle too full."

And Macnorton, beaming, would say two of the twelve English words he knew: "Like thees!"—and shoot a thin jet from his pursed lips, right across the stage into a large bowl some twenty feet away.

The moment that the stocky little man opened his mouth to eject the first stream, the audience started to laugh. There was something so irresistibly comical about the sight of an obviously dignified French gentleman, attired in full evening dress, spurting great streams of water into the air.

Later came the big moment, the climax to the act.

"For your benefit tonight, ladies and gentlemen," Madame Macnorton would say, "he will give an even more convincing demonstration of his powers. He is going to make his stomach into a veritable aquarium. He weel swallow a mixed dish of fish, and, being a Frenchman, his very favourite titbit—*frogs*!

"Sensitive people need have no repugnance regarding thees feat. There is nothing cleaner in the world than a fish or a frog."

The orchestra would stop playing and, in dramatic silence, a table bearing a water-filled aquarium would be carried on. From underneath it, Macnorton would produce a canister containing about a dozen goldfish. These he would pour in a glittering shower into the aquarium, after which he would drink—very rapidly—fifteen glasses of water, explaining helpfully: "Not for me—for the feesh!".

This done, he would take a small net and scoop about six of the goldfish into his left hand, holding them just above the tail. Then he would place the wriggling creatures one by one on his tongue, close his eyes, give a mighty gulp—and they were gone.

Then he would produce another can and from it pour a dozen extremely energetic frogs of the edible variety.

Taking the frogs by the legs, he would arrange a kicking posy of three or four at a time in his left hand and, employing the same technique that he had applied to the goldfish, send them to join their playmates.

This done, he would point to his midriff and bow, thus allowing his audience to imagine the live aquatic animals which were swimming around inside.

Now followed the astounding part of his act. One by one he would—without visible muscular action of any kind—produce first the fish, then the frogs, slowly from between his lips.

To show that it was not a conjuring trick, he kept his hands resting at his sides.

When all the squirming creatures had been returned to the aquarium he would shout: "All alive and keeking!" and the curtain would fall to a gale of delighted applause.

After taking his call he always pretended to have forgotten one of the frogs, and with a surprised look on his face would allow it to pop out into his hand, just as he was going off the stage.

He was a showman to his epiglottis.

In all the time I knew him there was never a single casualty among his "assistants." They lived longer than most creatures of their kind because he knew how to look after them. Some of the goldfish were six years old, and he generously presented his favourite "pensioner" to my children, who promptly christened it Louis Claude. They have it to this day.

At the end of his tour with *Well, I Never!* Macnorton caught a bus out into the country, taking with him his canister of frogs. When he arrived at a marshy spot, he took off the lid and released them one by one, kissing each frog tenderly before it hopped away. They had served him well, and now they deserved their freedom. . . .

My underwater production, *Hold Your Breath!* was, as far as can be ascertained, the first show in the world to be presented in a portable glass-fronted swimming pool.

A windowed pool, built in sections to facilitate travel, was constructed in armour-plated glass and pressed steel, and on no occasion—although it was erected and dismantled hundreds of times in towns all over the world—did the structure of the tank itself give the slightest cause for anxiety.

While work on this essential piece of equipment was in progress, I started to engage my cast. Auditions were held for the selection of suitable swimmers and divers, and soon I had a fine line-up of pretty girls and husky men. I also wanted some frogmen, but, try as I might, I could not even find one, let alone put one under contract.

One weekend I went down to Portsmouth and made a tour of all the bars frequented by navy personnel, asking in each if the proprietor happened to know of a good frogman he could recommend for a job on the stage. They must have thought I was crazy—all, that is, except the boss of one pub, who said: "You ought to get in touch with Lieutenant Ian Fraser, V.C. He's an ex-naval frogman, and he's giving displays to finance his own commercial diving business."

"Ian Fraser. . . . Wasn't he one of the fellows who blew up a Japanese warship near Singapore?"

"That's the chap."

"Where can I reach him?"

"He lives in Manchester, I think."

Fraser became the star of my show. I am proud to say that he relied upon my own sense of the fitness of things to ensure that no cheap publicity of any kind tarnished his name or his great award, and none ever did.

Hold Your Breath! was split up into three parts. The first forty-five minutes were devoted to "thrill" acts of all kinds. Then came the frogmen scene, and after that the "Aqua-Revuette"—a complete little show which included underwater ballet, fancy underwater swimming, trick and comedy diving, and an underwater "tea party."

One of the most intriguing items in the Aqua-Revuette was the underwater smoking by Doug Wainwright and "Professor" Conky Javon.

The Professor and Doug would invariably produce their pipes and, with every evidence of keen enjoyment, puff great clouds of smoke into the water. I could not imagine how it was done. Then, one day while I was talking to Doug just before he was going on, a small phial of milk dropped out of his costume. The mystery was solved. He took a surreptitious mouthful of milk at the end of the tea party and expelled it in bursts to simulate smoke.

In its various forms *Hold Your Breath!* played long tours in both the old and new worlds.

There was the time the tank—all twenty tons of it—nearly fell on top of the audience. We transported it, already assembled, on a flat-topped eight-wheeler, as all our shows were being given in outdoor theatres. At an auditorium exactly one degree north of the equator we chose what appeared to be a suitably firm site for our pitch. After fitting the safety-jacks we started to fill up.

Water was always a problem in the tropics, and on this occasion it had been necessary to buy three milk-tankers full of drinking water from the local reservoir. The audience started to assemble before the first load was pumped in and, in spite of the efforts of the attendants to keep them back, pressed against the tank with the single-minded enthusiasm of people watching a hole in the road.

Suddenly the whole gigantic structure tilted sideways like a doomed ship; water poured over the lower end, flattening the mechanic who was operating the filter valve, and everybody started to scream at the same time.

If the tank had gone on tilting I dread to think of what would have happened—many people must surely have been crushed. Happily, it didn't. After it had sunk about four feet out of true, the downward movement ceased, and by lowering the jacks at the higher end we were able to level it off. The rest of the water was pumped in very slowly and we gave a show, but I didn't breathe freely again until we were on the road to the next site. . . .

Among the most remarkable artists I have presented is Tom Jacobsen. He was born at Newport, Monmouthshire, on April 28, 1921, and was a perfectly normal child in every way but one. He was born without arms.

His story, which he himself does not consider to be particularly remarkable, is one of the greatest examples of human courage I have known. For, in spite of his appalling handicap, he earns his living as a professional pianist—he plays with his feet.

On the strength of his engagement to appear in my show, *Well, I Never!* Tom hurried home to Newport and married Violet Prowse, a pretty brunette who lived next door and who had been his sweetheart ever since he could remember. They were married in Holy Trinity Church, Newport, on July 17, 1947. He signed the register with his foot.

Their daughter Diana was born on August 10, 1948.

When he visited Newcastle in 1951 Tom was given a course of shooting instruction at the Territorials' drill hall. The weapon with which he was taught was a standard .303 service rifle, a heavy gun for an armless man. He proved to be a natural shot, and at the end of a week could invariably arrange his bullets close to the centre mark.

In his daily life Tom neither asks for, nor receives, special consideration of any kind because of his armless state. He is a completely independent being who can perform all routine tasks for himself.

Also astonishing, in another way, is a white fakir named Amir Rahvis who appeared in my 1954 edition of *Would You Believe It!* This mystic amazed all who saw him by his fire-eating and sword-swallowing displays and his bed of nails act.

More noteworthy still was his whim at every performance of sliding down his throat a lighted eighteen-inch neon tube through which was passing a current of four thousand volts. When the lights were switched off, you could see his vitals glowing red in the darkness—a very pretty effect.

The talents of Ludwig Kocka (pronounced Koshka) are completely different.

Ludwig, who began life fifty-three years ago in what is now the Czechoslovakian Republic, used to be a lion tamer. He was in the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool, recovering from his latest mauling from a giant cat—his cheeks had been clawed open—when he opened his eyes and saw before him a long, slim, elegant young man of about twenty-eight, who leaned casually back in the visitor's armchair, the tips of his fingers placed precisely together in the form of a pyramid. His voice was obviously the product of one of the better English public schools. His skin was of a light copper brown.

"My dear old lad, if you persist in this crazy lion-taming business of yours, you won't live to be thirty, let alone three score and ten," drawled the visitor. "Why don't you take up something less hazardous, something really original? Hypnotizing crocodiles, for example."

Hypnotizing crocodiles! Ludwig sat bolt upright.

"Go on," he said. "I'm listening."

The visitor talked earnestly for three-quarters of an hour, and, when he rose to leave, placed his visiting card on the bedside table.

"Think over what I've been telling

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Ludwig Kocka hypnotizes crocodiles by thinking of a miracle man he met in India. Amir Rahvis was a London income tax official before he took to his bed of nails

you," he said. "If you decide to take my advice I'll be glad to see you at any time."

Ludwig carefully studied the piece of pasteboard he had left behind. In copperplate lettering it bore the words: His Serene Highness The Maharajah Karah Khavak, Calcutta.

Immediately the Blackpool season ended, Ludwig sailed for Calcutta.

The maharajah greeted him warmly but admitted that he had not expected Ludwig quite so soon. "To be frank," he said, "you have caught me on the hop. I am usually fairly well stocked up with crocodiles, but at the moment I doubt if you will have more than a hundred and fifty specimens from which to make a choice. Let us visit the pool."

The pool seethed with the scaly bodies of crocodiles of all sizes, some twenty feet long. Some rested with their snouts just showing above the surface, some slumbered on the edge of the pool. Others were attempting—luckily without hope of success—to crawl up the steep outer sides.

A small procession approached. It was made up of five attendants and another person whose striking bearded face, quiet, assured voice, imposing figure and spotless white robes showed him to be a man of considerable authority. He appeared to be about fifty years of age. He looked across the pool and bowed gravely to the maharajah. Then his piercing black eyes caught Ludwig's, held them for a space of seconds, and he bowed again.

"That," said the maharajah, "is a holy man attached to my retinue. He has many extraordinary powers."

Two attendants paced the edge of the pool, seeking a suitable subject for the first demonstration. Suddenly they bent down and, seizing a crocodile by the snout, hauled it out of the water. It was about nine feet long and extremely annoyed at being thus rudely disturbed. It hissed menacingly and lashed out at the attendants' legs with its tail. They skipped coolly out of its reach.

The holy man was standing at least twenty feet away. He did not approach the crocodile at all. He stood perfectly erect and gazed at it—that was all. No mysterious passes, no movements of the body. But Ludwig observed that his lips were moving silently.

Within seconds the furious whipping of the tail ceased, the angry hissing died away, and the big crocodile sank slowly down on to its belly.

It lay like a living statue as the holy man relaxed. "There," he said to Ludwig, "That is all you have to do. It is really very simple."

"But what," asked the bewildered Ludwig, "*did* you do? Apart from staring at the thing and moving your lips, I couldn't see that you did anything at all."

"I *thought*," said the man gravely, "I thought of what I wished the crocodile to do, putting all else out of my mind. Always when you are hynotizing, think of me. Although I am not with you in the flesh, if you think of me I shall help you."

And, turning on his heel, he walked away. Ludwig's lesson was over. He never had another one because he never saw the holy man again.

Acting on the principle that what one man can do another can, Ludwig spent the remainder of his time at the maharajah's home trying to hypnotize the giant reptiles and learning as much as he could about their care and handling. Occasionally he had the satisfaction of being able to fix in position—momentarily—one or other of the brutes; but that was all. He spoke no word of his disappointment to his host. . . .

"Have you given any thought to the name you will adopt for the presentation of your new act?" the maharajah inquired. "If you wish, you may use my own name, Karah Khavak."

Ludwig accepted the honour immediately.

With four crocodiles given him by the maharajah, the new Karah Khavak sailed home after a brief visit to Singapore to buy snakes. In Hungary, there was a certain little black-haired beauty, daughter of a circus orchestra leader, who, he thought, might lend a touch of glamour to his new act in the rôle of snake dancer. Her name was Irene, and she is now his wife.

For two years after his return to Europe the act of Karah Khavak and his Temple of Jungle Reptiles was a dismal flop. More, it was a dangerous muddle, and Ludwig loathed having to expose Irene to it twice daily. The crocodiles wandered, out of control, all over the ring.

One night, feeling distinctly foolish, he selected the most unruly of his beasts and took it to a quiet corner of the circus enclosure. This last experiment he wanted to make alone. If it didn't come off, he would give up the act. He was tired of being the secret laughing-stock of the whole circus profession. Standing in front of the animal, he projected himself back mentally to the palm-fringed pool outside Calcutta. What was it that the holy man had said?

"Always, when you are hypnotizing, think of me."

Ludwig thought of him. The picture he conjured up was that of the holy man as he had last seen him, with his dark bearded face, piercing eyes, and moving, prayerful lips. The result frightened him.

The huge, angry reptile immediately ceased to lash its tail, as if a wand had been passed over it; the furious hissing died in its throat—and, slowly, it sank down on to its belly.

It remained in that state for a period which, Ludwig says, must have been at least four minutes. When it came back to life Ludwig tried again, still thinking of the holy man. With the same result!

He hypnotized that crocodile fourteen times. . . .

The following night the manager of the circus rushed round to Ludwig's dressing-room after he came out of the ring. "What has happened?" he cried. "You can do it—you can really do it at last. How did you learn the secret?"

Ludwig shrugged his shoulders. He wasn't going to tell this man and be classified as a nut.

"I have found the knack," was all he said.

Yet another mystic I have put under contract is Rudolf Schmid, an Austrian whose yoga name is Rayo. On December 13, 1952, he entered a large, specially constructed glass bottle. Twelve months and one week later, he emerged. His health, in spite of his long enclosure, was found to be perfect—except that he had temporarily lost the use of his legs. His weight had decreased by sixty-eight pounds, or nearly five stone.

I called on Rayo in his home town, Bad Hall, one April.

"What act are you going to show me this afternoon?" I inquired. For, in addition to discussing arrangements for filming his bottle experiment, it had been decided that Rayo should demonstrate his entertainment capabilities. A thoughtful frown creased his brow.

"I think," he said slowly, "I shall let you see my sharp-shooting act with owls, my plate-balancing crocodile, the exercise in which I draw a steel globe by means of a hook thrust through my tongue, and my calculating toad."

I could hardly wait.

He showed me all the tricks he had promised and many more besides. Finally he plunged his hand into an inside pocket and drew out the biggest and most beautifully ugly green toad I had ever seen. Its name was Heinrich, and it was almost as big as the hand on which it sat.

"What number would you like Heinrich to count?"

"Seven!"

Rayo produced a little silver whistle and put it into the toad's mouth.

"Heinrich! Count seven!"

And that darn toad blew the whistle seven times.

"Please try him with another number," said Rayo.

"Twelve!"

Heinrich puffed out twelve tiny blasts. You could see his throat and breast swelling as he blew.

"Now would you care to set him a few simple arithmetical problems?"

Well, of course, there's always a weak spot in this kind of act. Perfection, experience has shown me, is too much to expect. While entirely sound on addition, multiplication and subtraction, Heinrich was simply hopeless when it came to long division. I tried him with sum after sum, and he got the wrong answer three times out of five.

His master was obviously acutely embarrassed.

"I don't know what's come over him," he said, giving Heinrich a really severe look. "He's never made so many mistakes before."

I felt sorry for the poor reptile.

"Perhaps he's nervous," I suggested.

"Nervous! He doesn't know what nerves are. No, I think it must be that wasp he ate this morning. I warned him that no good would come of it."

And glumly he returned the disgraced toad to his pocket.

The famous bottle was standing in a corner of the room during the audition, covered by a silk cloth. Rayo led me over to it and pulled this drape aside.

It looked to me more like a giant old-fashioned candle-lantern than a bottle, but Rayo explained that the shape was copied from a Javanese oil-flask. There was not room inside it for a man to stand upright. Although the body of the bottle was comparatively spacious, it narrowed to less than twelve inches in diameter at the top.

The only item that was in any way unexpected was a small electrically operated air-extractor, which fitted over the mouth of the bottle and which, I was told, was kept running most of the time that Rayo was in residence. This evidence of scientific planning impressed and reassured me.

One of the glass sides of the bottle was broken where Rayo had smashed it with a hammer when preparing to emerge.

Rayo told me all I wished to know about himself and his extraordinary work. . . .

His first big experiment had been staged in Bucharest, where for eighty days he lay in meditation on a couch with his tongue nailed to a 32-lb. board.

The following year he repeated his tongue-and-board experiment—only this time he did so in a large empty shop which could hold many more people, and it was only necessary for him to work for forty-four days in order to earn the same amount of money as before.

When war broke out in 1939 he was conscripted into an organization which he terms "the German E.N.S.A.," and played on all fronts until 1945.

He signalled his return to civilian life by having himself buried for a month six feet under the earth in an ordinary wooden coffin. People paid to peep at him through a long periscope. This little exercise in the yoga cult gained him nearly £1,000.

But for years Rayo had been working on what to him seemed his first really artistic and wholly satisfying plan—to be sealed in a bottle for a year with a three-foot poisonous Syrian snake for company.

For 372 days he travelled through Austria, Germany, Switzerland and France, pausing a day or two in each of the towns on his route. At the frontiers the control officers used to bellow with laughter when Rayo handed his passport up to them through the neck of the bottle.

Everything he used, of course, had to be passed up and down the neck of the bottle. The only article of furniture he allowed himself was a small leather-seated folding stool. Usually he scorned this luxury, however, and adopted what he termed the "Turkish Sitting Posture." We would call it squatting tailor-fashion, with crossed legs.

To keep fit he employed a system of massage. Sometimes during cold weather he rubbed his body with olive oil; but usually he took sponge baths with cold water twice a day—with a screen placed round the bottle.

Because of the scarcity of air, his every movement while inside the bottle had to be leisurely and calm. His few amusements were of the same order. He particularly enjoyed a game of chess with one or other of his assistants, and found no difficulty in signalling through the glass the moves that he wished to make. He is a skilled player and few can beat him.

On December 20, 1953, the much-travelled truck bearing the bottled man rolled into its final resting-place on the Hessenplatz at Linz.

It was all over. On the way back to Bad Hall in the ambulance he kept repeating to his wife, Lotte: "I said I would stay inside that bottle for a year, and I did."

When discussing the Rayo experiment, people often say: "I wonder what it feels like to be inside a bottle?"

I can answer that question from personal experience. As a joke, before Rayo was sealed into the bottle while making the film, I dressed myself in his robes and turban, sat on the wooden base, and had the bottle lowered into position over my body.

I stayed inside it for twenty minutes. All I can say is that it was hot in there. And pongy.

THE END

Pete Collins's story will be published by Muller at the end of June, price 20s., under the title of "No People Like Show People"

Best foot forward

Continued from page 13

glared downwards. Not a puff of smoke, not the sign of a ship. My controls were intact, but I was being hit, as a series of further bangs convinced me. The drill for baling out rushed through my mind.

Then, just before I went through those fatal manoeuvres, I remembered the ping-pong balls that I had stored in my tin legs to keep me afloat if I ever ditched in the sea. The rarefied atmosphere at nearly 30,000 feet had been too much for them.

To the accompaniment of what were now expiring pops instead of savage explosions, I climbed up and regained formation. I was blushing deeply, conscious that Johnny and the rest of the squadron must think that either I was suffering from lack of oxygen or had gone raving mad.

After that I ditched my ping-pong balls. . . .

In the spring and summer of 1943, the Germans were pinpricking us with tip and run raids on the south coast.

There was not the slightest strategic value in these raids, which were carried out by fighters carrying a single small bomb, but they led to a great increase in our standing patrols.

One day, having finished a patrol, I headed for home. I broke cloud first at three thousand feet about two miles west of Brighton and saw, as I came into clear air, four plumes of black smoke gush up in the middle of the town. Instantaneously my eye picked out four aircraft racing low over the houses towards the Channel—190s!

My No. 1 and I heeled into a dive, cramming on full power.

I went for the aircraft on the right, turned my gun button to "Fire," and settled myself lower in the seat.

It was now or never. I gave him a three-seconds burst, saw strikes, smoky-bright sparks on his body and wings, then I was rocking in his slipstream and braking away up and to port, right over his head. I looked back anxiously, saw nothing; turned tighter and saw him go somersaulting in a great wing of white water a hundred yards off the end of Brighton pier. I had broken my "duck."

A fortnight later I flew on my first "Rhubarb," one of those murderous, low-level attacks in which we beat up any military targets that offered.

My companion was a pilot officer called Paddy Small, a lissom, fiery Irishman from County Limerick. Our briefing was to attack canal, road and rail traffic in the Dieppe-Le Havre area, but what Paddy and I really wanted was to get a train. "When they're hit," said Paddy (who had never hit one), "they stop and blow and blow, like whales. It's a most warming and lugubrious sight."

We took off and went out low at fifty feet. I crossed in over the familiar cliffs north of Dieppe and turned south-west, looking for the railway.

Then, beyond a line of sheds, I saw a train. It was stationary and passenger, but the engine was in my sights and growing. I gave it a good squirt from about two hundred yards. I saw the strikes leapfrogging: tender, cab, boiler. Two men leaped awkwardly from the footplate and steam puffed out lazily—not quite as Paddy had said.

ON up the line with Paddy swaying close on the left and suddenly another train, goods this time, stopped across a slender bridge. No, not stopped, just moving. We fired together and the tracer ruled out forwards, red and true. The boiler again, and cloudy steam laced with flame.

"She's falling!" yelled Paddy, as we banked away, and I saw it turning over like a great oily animal.

I felt wonderful, fit to fly to Paris and do a slow roll through the Arc de Triomphe. We turned in a tight arc and went back on our tracks, hunting northwards. We shot up another train, blew up a huge petrol tank, and turned for home.

At the end of the month, just as operations were beginning to be more interesting and successful. Johnny

"We feel it makes the room look bigger"

announced that the squadron was posted to Bolt Head. He had been promoted and was going to Kenley as wing commander flying.

I was still not satisfied that I had seen enough fighting and I was posted to the incoming squadron, No. 501.

In 501 I felt almost a veteran. Most of the pilots were greenhorns and very few, perhaps three or four, had seen a gun fired in anger. Although I had scarcely seven months of action behind me I was made deputy flight commander of A Flight, which I frequently led. I prayed that not too much should be asked of me for at least the first few sorties.

In fact, the squadron's baptism of fire proved to be rather hectic, with much close escort work for Fortresses and Mitchells bombing targets which were sometimes deep in enemy country. It seemed to me that the flak batteries had been reinforced, and on one trip I was hit.

This was a far more unnerving experience than the ping-pong episode. Flying at 12,000 feet, I suddenly felt a tremendous blow under the seat, and the stick was wrenched from my hands. The explosion was unbelievably loud.

I snatched back the stick, fully expecting fumes in the cockpit. But the stick answered and the rudder. The engine still turned with unabated revs. "Come on, Hodgkinson," I muttered, "you're not dead yet."

Nor was I, but the trip across the sea was the most agonizing I had so far experienced. To my surprise the wheels came down and stayed down, though I swung violently on landing. I climbed out anxiously and bent down behind the wing to inspect the ruin of my poor Spit's underside. But there was nothing, nothing at all but a punctured tyre and, in a corner of the wheel casing, an insignificant whorl of steel, no bigger than a florin.

I felt that I had behaved like a windy fool until I looked closer and saw that a hit a couple of inches to right or left would have cut the hydraulics or pierced the glycol tank.

I flew another six operations with 501 at Tangmere, and then, when the squadron was posted to a quieter sector, I went to see Johnny at Kenley. Again he shuffled the cards. There was a vacancy in the County of West Lancs Squadron—No. 611; would that suit me? Suit me! This was what I had dreamed of, the promised land. I knew nothing about 611 except two things: it flew Spitfire Nines, and it formed part of the Biggin Hill Wing.

Biggin Hill *and* Spit Nines!

It is difficult for anyone who was not in Fighter Command in 1943 to understand the prestige which Biggin Hill enjoyed. Its squadrons were the Guards of the R.A.F. It had the latest aircraft, famous leaders, and the Battle of Britain's great renown. It did "the best things best." Not since I flew the Spitfire for the first time had I been so excited. I had always wanted to be in the first eleven and Biggin, for me at this stage, was exactly that.

I wasn't disappointed. The station was commanded by "Sailor" Malan, now a much-decorated group captain. Its two squadrons, 611 and 341, were led by Wing Commander "Al" Deere, also one of the immortal "Few": a big, broad, hefty man round whose bulk the Spitfire looked like a kayak. Concerning me more closely were Squadron Leader Jack Charles, commanding 611, and Flight Lieutenant Johnny Checketts, in charge of A Flight, to which I was posted. The commander of B Flight was Colloredo Mansfeld, an Austrian count.

The fact that 341 was a French squadron gave a wonderful liveliness and variety to life at Biggin. The French were commanded by the famous René Mouchotte, a pilot of considerable

CHANCE—I

He that leaves nothing to chance will do few things ill, but he will do very few things.

The first Lord Halifax

experience and prestige who frequently led the wing—the first foreign ally to be accorded such a privilege.

Our crew room at Biggin was typical of the "only the best will do" attitude of the wing. We had deep sofas and armchairs covered with arty chintz, the latest thing in stoves and a fine radiogram. A modification to this radiogram linked it up with the very high frequency sets in the aircraft, so that whenever the squadron was operating all who were not on the show could lean back comfortably and listen to the dog fight.

Once, I remember, as the pilots' obscenities grew saltier and saltier, proclaiming that things were really warming up, a prim professorial voice from the ops room intruded on this idiom of battle, murder and sudden death. "Will you *please* moderate your language, gentlemen. I would remind you that there are ladies present." This was the sort of thing that made the Frenchmen tear their hair in exasperation.

Operations excepted, the most exciting occasion during the month I spent at Biggin Hill was the fabulous party held in London to celebrate the sector's total of a thousand enemy aircraft. Lots were drawn for those who could be spared to attend and I, rather undeservedly, was among the lucky ones. The party, one of the biggest of the war, was held in Grosvenor House. It was paid for and organized by Vickers, who made the Spitfire, and everyone of importance, from the Prime Minister, Cabinet and Air Staff down to the girls from the Windmill Theatre, was invited. The Prime Minister, unhappily, couldn't attend; the Windmill girls, happily, did. . . .

The days passed all too quickly at Biggin and it was a real blow to hear, towards the end of the month, that the squadron was leaving to become part of 12 Group at Coltishall, near Norwich. When I first heard the news I thought that the time had come round again for me to exert my talent for self-selling. Then I reflected that 611 was the first squadron in which I had really found my feet—tin though they were. I decided to stick with 611.

In Spit Fives once more, which were taken over from 485, the New Zealand squadron which relieved us, 611 flew to Norfolk on July 1.

Coltishall was a gay, well-run station with excellent commanders, who both subsequently became Members of Parliament. The group captain was Vere Harvey, and the wing was led by Laddie Lucas, lately back from Malta, where he had commanded a squadron with great distinction.

Vere Harvey, a successful business man before the war and an Auxiliary Air Force flyer, was urbane and tactful with a great understanding of just how much he could ask his men to do. He had need of all these qualities on the evening of July 25.

That afternoon we and 64 Squadron, led by Laddie Lucas, took over a dozen Mitchells to bomb Schipol, the airfield for Amsterdam. As the bombers finished their runs, the wing was attacked by a tangle of 109 Fs. We got four down in three minutes. We re-formed and went on for the coast.

We were hardly over the sea when someone called: "You're smoking, Jack."

"Yeah, guess I am," Jack Charles's voice came back. "My temperature gauge is going off the clock."

"Get out farther and ditch," Colley Mansfeld told him, "we'll come back for you."

Jack baled out at 2,000 feet and we watched the parachute go down and settle, the yellow rubber dinghy inflate and Jack drag himself into it.

While Colley circled him I went up high and gave a "May Day"—the S O S signal which would set the Air Sea Rescue machinery in motion. Then we raced home at full throttle. Jack was down only ten miles from the Dutch coast, it was a clear day and he must have been seen by the Hun. I didn't give a cup of tea for his chances.

Nor, apparently, did Operations, as we found out when we landed. From so far out my "May Day" had been faint, they said. Having no idea of Jack's position they refused to scramble the amphibian Walrus which, normally, should already have been sent to search. All they could do, they informed Colley, was to dispatch four Typhoons from 56 Squadron to look for him. Meanwhile, the squadron must refuel and hold itself in readiness for another operation in two hours' time.

We weren't satisfied with that. We wanted Charles back, and if it was possible we were going to get him. Colley soon had to deal with a deputation. The pilots demanded a squadron search immediately, with or without 12 Group's permission. While I settled down with slide rule and map to figure out exactly where I had last seen the dinghy, Colley rang Group again and again. Fruitlessly.

At 5.30, when we should have been preparing for the operation Group had ordered, two sergeant pilots in my section took me aside. "We won't fly, sir," they said. "Not until we've had a crack at getting the squadron leader out." I suppose I should have reprimanded them, or even put them under arrest. I didn't.

It was then that we rang Vere Harvey, the station commander. He came over at once, and the crowd at the door must have told him to what pitch things had come. We knew nothing of the conversation he had with Group, but the Walrus took off almost immediately. Forty minutes later, with Colley Mansfeld, the deputy commander, leading, eight of us were headed out for Holland. It was 7.15.

None of us was very happy. It was

a flawless evening and it seemed impossible that the Hun was unaware of what was in the wind. In all probability they had picked Jack up already and were waiting for us, stepped up high against the dazzling light. I was not going to like this a little bit.

At 8.30 the coast was visible and we were still unattacked. Five minutes later, we saw him, just below and precisely on course.

We swooped down, waved, waggled wings. Jack was spreadeagled in his yellow lozenge, splashing lazily. He looked, I thought, a damned sight more unconcerned than we.

For another hour we orbited. Then, at last, the Walrus arrived, alighted and taxied up to the dinghy. Jack climbed in and waved his thanks. . . .

By the end of July I had flown almost a hundred operations, practically all of them demanding long flights over water, and I was beginning to feel the strain. I badly needed distraction, some interest and anxiety other than flying. It appeared in the person of Claire, a W.A.A.F. officer from a neighbouring R.A.F. unit. I met her at a mess dance; cool, blonde, distinguished, lovely—and flanked by three wing commanders.

I was too powerfully excited to let wing commanders stand in my way. I managed to catch her eye, dredged up all my courage—some of it Dutch—and stumped brazenly over to her group. I don't think I even waited for an introduction. The next thing I knew was that we were at the bar, then dancing, then having supper together and dancing again.

When the evening ended with a promise from Claire to meet me as soon as it was possible I was a lost man, hopelessly infatuated and proud as I had never been.

Thereafter we saw each other as often as it could be arranged. Whenever there was an aircraft available I flew over to her station; or Claire, with a few hours off, came to see me.

She was five years my senior and very rich. Sophisticated and cultured, living in another world from mine, she knocked some of my rough angles smooth, while her acceptance of me as a companion helped to restore my masculine confidence.

It was flattering for my ailing pride to be the recognized cavalier of this pretty, witty, much sought-after woman, and although no doubt I was more deeply involved than she in an association which could have no future, she was wise and kind enough to ensure it left no hurt. . . .

I CELEBRATED my one hundredth operation with the fiercest battle of my experience—and bagged a Hun. It was to be quite a big escort for thirty-six Marauders bombing Bernay Airfield, near Evreux in France—a fairly deep penetration for which the squadron flew down to operate from Tangmere. A Czech squadron briefed to join the close escort failed to make rendezvous, and Laddie Lucas finally led the wing off with the dangerously diminished strength of twenty-two aircraft. I was leading Blue Section; Yellow Section was in charge of a Norwegian flight lieutenant—Austeen. The day was fine, too fine to go jousting with so depleted an escort.

As the Marauders bombed on the turn, I looked up and to the left saw the great radial engine of a 190 and behind, diving from the sun, at least two squadrons of his pals.

"Shoals of them at seven o'clock!" I shouted, turning tight as three came down firing on each side.

"Fifty!" Austeen yelled.

"O.K., Hoppy, I can see them now. Keep your sections." This, for all the excitement in Laddie's voice, might have been a formation exercise.

For the next minute the sky was a crazy pattern of hurtling shapes, as if every horse on a merry-go-round had suddenly sheered. I saw Laddie alone and turned in behind him as three Huns slipped on to my tail. All were firing. My Spit bumped and shook, hit in the main plane, and still they fired, every shell snaking closer. I was sweating, getting giddy. Lucas was leading this infernal circus, away on the left, and looking across calmly.

"For God's sake, Laddie!" I yelled, "turn tighter, they've got a bend on me."

"O.K., Hoppy. Tighter."

"Tighter still, Laddie."

I set my teeth and gave a last wrench to the stick to keep with him.

"I think we're in the clear now, Hoppy," said Lucas almost blandly. But we weren't. I saw one off to the right, flying fast in a narrow angled dive, far out and crossing. This was for me. For the first time I was really angry in the air. My 190 was an almost impossible shot, needing tremendous deflection.

I swung with it; first behind it, then through it, then, bringing the stick over, right in front of it, while pressing the gun button. I saw one strike, two, and he flicked on his back and dropped.

Nine against fifty, we fought our way back to the coast, and Laddie led us to Tangmere. The wing had got six down, we had lost one Spitfire and another had ditched. Austeen claimed a damaged. I was rather glum at having nothing to show for such a fight, when my No. 2 came up.

"That was the hell of a shot, Hoppy."

"Did I get him?"

"Yes. He went down straight, then flamed and I saw him blow up. . . ."

Towards the end of the year I joined 501 Squadron at Hawkinge as a flight commander. This posting had come as a pleasant surprise, though it had been a wrench to leave 611 where, with Jack Charles, Colley Mansfeld and the rest I had grown to be adult in the operational sense.

I was alone in the crew room at Hawkinge on November 23. As A Flight commander I had stayed behind to chalk up on the detail board the names of those pilots who were to take part in an operation planned for that afternoon. We were to provide, with other squadrons, escort for a heavy strike of American Fortresses due to attack rocket sites in the Pas-de-Calais. It was timed for the early afternoon. The morning had been fine, but the weather grew steadily worse towards midday.

Everyone had long since gone to lunch and I was feeling very hungry when I prepared to leave for the mess. I was halfway out of the door when the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver.

A girl replied. The afternoon's strike, she told me, was doubtful on account of the weather. It was vital to know the exact conditions prevailing over the target. Could someone carry out an immediate reconnaissance?

This was a damned nuisance. I had only sufficient aircraft to fill my detail for the show, and I badly wanted to take part in the operation. If I did this jaunt over Amiens I should probably be back at base too late to lead my flight.

I muttered acquiescence, adding something about a compensatory rendezvous for what I told her was the "hell of a bind."

"You may be lucky," she answered.

Feeling angry with myself and curiously apprehensive, I collected my parachute and walked out to the aircraft. This was a new Spitfire Nine which had been delivered to the squadron the day before. I had never flown it but had arranged to use it for the operation. I took straight off and headed over the Channel. The cloud enveloped me totally as soon as I started my climb over the French coast. It was wet and dingy, full of bumps and, seeing it so thick, all my loathing of cloud flying returned.

Things were no better at 7,000 feet. I realized that I was in for a long haul and switched on my oxygen to the full. And I remembered with displeasure that I was over a hotly defended part of northern France.

At 15,000 feet I was still climbing with still no sign of a break. I went up to 27,000 feet through cloud as thick as ever. Every three minutes or so Ops gave me laconic changes of course, and I in return gave a commentary on what I was going through.

At 29,000 feet I became aware of the first signs of a break. I could distinguish my streaming wing tips, and a sour light spread through the cockpit's gloom. I rode a last violent bump and broke through the top to a world of dazzling white.

I saw what I had been sure I would see—the sun shining on a total undercast, a plateau of cloud which stretched for fifty miles in every direction. I told Ops. I let them know my height: 31,000 feet. I suggested by implication and most emphatically that no bombing operation could be possible that afternoon and that I should be given a vector for base.

"No, Hawkeye One Four. You must continue. Your target is still forty miles away. Vector two one zero."

I cursed him heartily, as I put the stick over, angry now and suddenly more than anxious—afraid. Then a pleasant weakness crept into my limbs. My hands relaxed their grip on the stick, my eyelids began to flutter.

With what could have been one of my last few minutes of consciousness I recognized these symptoms for what they were—the first onset of oxygen starvation. Total blackout was not more than a few minutes away. I wheeled the Spitfire on its back and dropped like a plummet for the cloud.

It swallowed me in, dark and turbulent. So turbulent that I braked the speed of my dive, fearing to lose control. I called Ops, telling them of my trouble, demanding a vector for base.

"Zero three zero." The voice was alert and anxious now.

On I plunged, dropping at 5,000 feet a minute. I was on the verge of unconsciousness and almost out of control. The motion of moving my hands a few inches to the transmitter switch was more than I could afford. I switched over once. "Oxygen starvation. Fifteen thousand feet. Heading for base."

At 14,000 feet I believed I was recovering. My mind was playing lazily with the idea of an idea of something I should have done. Perhaps I knew that the time had come to switch my petrol from main to reserve. Perhaps I had neither the strength nor the inclination to pull the lever.

Half a minute later the motor coughed and cut dead, and I went down in a marvellous, clinging silence to break cloud in an almost vertical dive at 4,000 feet.

At least I was not over the sea. I saw houses, woods, brown fields addled with frost. Tracer was pelting past, meaningless and utterly irrelevant like the controller's voice still crackling in my headphones.

Ahead was something that looked like open space, a sloping field beyond a spinney. I drew the stick back and glided at it, without flaps, on a dead engine. The last thing I remember was that the flak had stopped. I glided on, feeling myself go, wonderfully happy.

I think I was asleep when I hit the ground.

NEXT WEEK: I get back home and fly again with the R.A.F.

STRANGE TALES OF THE SEA • 17

by Commander Douglas Duff

Angry devil-fish climbed aboard —to kill

ONE afternoon in the mid-1920s, the schooner Pearl lay becalmed in the Indian Ocean. A British steamship was passing less than a mile away when the crew heard rifle fire and saw that someone aboard the Pearl was firing at a large dark hump on the glassy surface of the flat-calm sea. Good shooting, too, for the bullets were striking the target.

But none of the watchers was prepared for what followed. The hump abruptly became the storm-centre of a fury of white foam and a large shape charged towards the schooner.

In less than a minute it reached the Pearl. Two long tentacles threshed the air, gripped a mast and a hatchway on deck, and a vast grey body began to heave itself aboard.

The schooner lurched madly, listing steeply under the great weight of the creature. Eight shorter arms, all lined with suckers, rose from the sea to help the two longer tentacles already fastened to the ship.

One sailor was crushed beneath the great body, while his shipmates cut and slashed at the gripping arms. All to no avail.

Farther inboard came the giant squid, its round, plate-shaped black eyes glittering, its powerful black beak, shaped like that of a tremendous parrot, clattering and clashing in its mad rage.

Farther over still listed the 122-ton schooner. The weight, growing with every heave of the creature, brought the deck closer to the sea, despite all the struggles of the crew. Down came the bulwarks, while the keel rose on the farther side, until the sea reached the open hatchway. The ship filled and sank.

By then the steamship had altered course and was racing back to help. But only five men were left alive and the giant squid was already speeding away.

These vast creatures have torpedo-shaped bodies, sometimes as long as twenty feet, two tentacles which can reach up to thirty-five feet, and eight shorter arms, all lined with powerful suckers. But their principal weapon is the powerful beak.

This vicious beak helps to produce some of the world's most delicate perfumes, for it is part of the giant squid which the sperm whale cannot digest. It sets up an irritation forming the ambergris that is the base of some of the finest scents—a treasure every whaleman dreams of finding.

CHANCE—2

A consistent man believes in destiny, a capricious man in chance.

Benjamin Disraeli

Hornblower's London

Continued from page 19

weeks, and I experienced a frightful wave of pity for him and resentment against the world, as intense as the emotions of a seven-year-old can be. I remember thinking that he was standing there grinding out those mechanically gay tunes because somewhere he had a hungry wife and children, and because he was hungry himself, in a world that presented to a dying man no better opportunity than that of turning the handle of a barrel organ.

I had spent a ha'penny of my Saturday penny, and the other ha'penny was still in my pocket. Growing more and more self-conscious every moment, I fumbled it out from among the myriad other things there, and put it in the Viking's hand. Shamefaced, I met one single glance from the Viking's blue eyes. That was a disturbing encounter. I do not even remember regretting parting with my precious ha'penny.

The world of those days was hard. Any political feelings I may have regarding the advance of paternalism in government are coloured by that memory. At least it is inconceivable nowadays that a man should be allowed to rot to pieces with tuberculosis, playing a barrel organ to earn his bread. It is also inconceivable that he should be allowed to remain on the streets spreading the infection.

WE didn't bother about infection in those days. Milk was delivered by a milkman who pushed about a hand barrow in which stood a glittering brass churn with a tap at the bottom. The milkman would fill a pail at the tap and then come to the house. You gave him your jug and said: "A pint, please," or "A quart, please," or whatever it was, according to the size of the family and the state of the family finances, and he would dip it out with one of the various tin measures which hung on the lip of the pail. Then he would add a few extra drops "for good measure"—a phrase which modern methods tend to make only a figure of speech.

I do not know who used to water that milk, whether it was the dairy company or the milkman himself adding to his wages, but to a town boy like myself milk always seemed to have a bluish tinge. One of the earth-shaking socialist suggestions of the Fabian Society was that the distribution of milk should be undertaken by the municipalities. That has never been done, but the quality of London milk has improved beyond recognition under capitalist management.

Some dairy farms preferred horse carts to push carts, dashing vehicles which, save for the brass churn in the middle, were almost exactly like Boadicea's chariot at the end of Westminster Bridge. They had no scythe blades on the axles, but from the furious way in which they were frequently driven they were nearly as dangerous as if they had.

Milk carts and butchers' traps always seemed to be driven as fast as the horses could put foot to the ground—an inspiring sight to a small boy. But the family drove faster still, or rather was driven, by its coachman, in its own hansom cab, a glittering vehicle in a tasteful dark green.

The sight of the doctor's hansom on Peckham Road overhauling and passing a brewer's dray thundering along behind a couple of vast Shire horses at full trot was something never to be forgotten.

In those pre-radio and pre-television days the Band of Hope provided entertainment which was scarce enough in any case.

The evening would begin with a magic lantern exhibition showing the effect of alcohol on the human liver, quite interesting to a small child with omniverous reading habits. When you had sat through that you were rewarded with a concert. There would be orchestral selections, and I, of course, used to think that the orchestra was the "Band" of Hope. The music was wildly exciting; the person who nowadays can have the finest music in the

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world by turning on a switch finds it difficult to imagine a world where orchestral music was a rarity. Yet there were other turns more exciting still.

I cannot remember the young man's name, and perhaps I never knew it, but he used to recite, about battle, murder and sudden death. He would put on a blue coat with gold braid and recite "Fultah Fisher's Boarding House," and then he would put on a red coat and recite "Gunga Din." Once he put on a cocked hat and a ruffled lace cravat and recited Noyes's "The Highwayman," which must have been pretty new at that time. He would declaim the verse with shouting and gestures, and the little boy listening to the resounding words thought they were marvellous.

The reciter acknowledged the applause by standing at the salute, and the salute in those days was a strange, exotic gesture, full of romance to people who never dreamed that they would live to see a world half of which would spend its time saluting the other half.

The Band of Hope was a temperance organization, but at the age of eight I used to emerge from its concerts as drunk as a skunk, drunk on Kipling and Newbolt. I would assume an appearance of sobriety sufficient to persuade the aunt who accompanied me that I could go home alone, and then, by myself, in the quiet streets full of romantic autumn scents, I would abandon myself to spiritual upheaval. The magic phrases would shoot through my mind like rockets—"The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God," "The Little Silver Crucifix," "You're a better man than I am"—and poetic fervour and the spirit of saintly self-denial would set

Going My Way?

by NOEL JONES

"One for the road!" they bawled,
"One more!"—and then,
Death took the wheel and called—
"Time, gentlemen!"

my heart thumping and my skinny legs leaping.

I must have been flushed and glittering-eyed when I reached home, but the adventure of being the smallest of a large family was that it was possible to evade notice, and to crouch in the corner of the gas-lit sitting-room, ignored by big brothers and sisters, with pencil and exercise book. I could hardly wait to lay my hands on them and scribble away at the poems boiling inside me. And then someone would notice me and I would be packed off to bed.

But bed, once the grim routine of washing and undressing had been struggled through, was no undesirable place, for I could lie in the darkness with whirlpools of rhyme and romance circling in my mind — whirlpools coloured like a blazing sunset—before going off imperceptibly into sleep, where dreams were not much different from what seemed to be the reality of the moment.

It was about that time that the discovery was made that the reading spells had ruined my infant eyesight, and that until I should be fitted with spectacles I was as near blind as made no matter.

How those spectacles changed the world! All sorts of things became clear to me which I had never dreamed of before. The Town Hall had a clock by which one could see the time. Trams carried signs indicating their destination which could actually be read; until that time I had fancied that adults were possessed of some faculty for telling a tram's destination which was denied to little boys—which happened to be true as regards the half-blind little boy that I was.

Spectacles changed my world and I changed, too; it may have been cause and effect and it may have been coincidence. The white-faced, sickly, industrious infant grew into a healthy, lanky boy who combined magnificent laziness with a talent for ingenious mischief that marked him out as the naughtiest boy of that generation at school. And my environment changed, and I said goodbye to Peckham Road—although I don't remember doing so, for at that heartless age I moved with none of the nostalgic regrets that have distinguished these paragraphs.

I moved with my family to Dulwich. Half way between those two homes Mr. William Marble, of *Payment Deferred*, buried a corpse in his back garden, and not far from there Randall, of *The River Of Time*, spent his married life. It was while I wandered along those quiet streets much later on, in the 1920s, that plots formed in my mind. Rifleman Dodd went through his adventures one evening as I walked along Court Lane, and *The Gun* played its part in the war in Spain as a result of watching the labours of a group of workmen removing the trunk of a fallen tree down towards Herne Hill.

The books were written in all sorts of odd places in the world, but that was where they had their start.

The second most sequestered railway station in the County of London is Sydenham Hill (the most sequestered is a mile away at Upper Sydenham). It was at Sydenham Hill Station that I placed an odd telephone call.

I had been talking to my agent in the morning and he had told me that a London newspaper—the *News Chronicle*—had a new project, of running five-day serials, and would pay good money for stories that would break up into five instalments with a punch at the end of each. Had I any ideas?

Regretfully, I said I had not. But as I passed the ticket barrier at Victoria, on the way home, the first germ of an idea bobbed up in my mind. It was followed by others as I walked along the side of the train. They took more definite shape during the twenty minutes' run to Sydenham Hill, and by the time I had left the train there I was too excited to wait until I reached home. I went into the telephone booth at the station, called my agent and told him that I had a five-jointed idea after all, and that I would start work on it at once. Then I hurried over the hill to get out pen and paper to write about Rose Sayer and her dying missionary brother, and the subsequent adventures of Rose in the launch called the African Queen.

The story appeared as a serial and, re-written, appeared as a novel, though it is still possible for the initiated reader to distinguish the five sections. Seventeen and a half years after I walked into that telephone box at Sydenham Hill I walked into the première of *The African Queen* in Hollywood to watch Katharine Hepburn play the part of Rose Sayer, and the late Humphrey Bogart give a performance as Allnutt which won him an Oscar.

If you go south from Camberwell Green you go through country associated with the names of Browning and Ruskin, and a little farther on you reach the prettiest corner in the whole of the County of London. Inhabitants of Hampstead and Highgate will turn up their noses at this statement, but Dulwich Village and its continuation, College Road, is the prettiest street in London, and the corner where Dulwich Common crosses it is the prettiest corner. That is where the duck pond and the college are; not far away is the Picture Gallery, with a noteworthy collection of art, and a quarter of a mile farther on is a toll gate.

Beyond the toll gate is the site of the Crystal Palace. During my boyhood the Palace still stood there, its vast galleries still retaining a few echoes of its glorious past, and smelling much the same as they did when the Prince Consort walked along them. Sometimes there would be exhibitions there, and fireworks, but even children who went there would be conscious that the real glory had departed, and they would listen with sceptical boredom to the glowing accounts of their elders. I myself was aware of the faint odour of decay, and never willingly extended my explorations so far. There were plenty of pleasant streets, pleasant even to this day, in which to roam and

dream—to dream of masterpieces today and of wickedness tomorrow.

There is a memory which I can smile at nowadays. No. 1 novel—never published, and quite rightly—had been finished some time back. No. 2 novel—later published, although it did not deserve to be—had been written with frantic energy in such a short time that No. 1 was still going the rounds of the publishers when it started out on the same rounds. And No. 3 was just going to be started, early on a grey, blustering winter morning.

A very young man, incredibly thin and lanky, was poising his pen over paper in a chilly room in a suburban house just where Camberwell becomes Dulwich. Times change, and so do we, and I suppose there is so little left nowadays of that young man whose bony frame afforded hardly room enough for all the passions that surged inside him that I can write about him more easily in the third person.

There was the postman's double knock, indicating the arrival of something more than a letter. And the young man went to the door, and the blustering wind burst in as he opened it, and whirled through the bare hall; and the postman thrust two parcels into his apathetic hands—no need for more than a glance for him to recognize the labels he himself had written. Those parcels contained the two novels, returned simultaneously by two indifferent publishers.

Well, there they were. Later in the morning he could go out and post them to two more publishers on the list.

Is it a happy ending that before No. 3 was finished No. 2 was accepted? It is at least satisfactory that novel No. 1 remained permanently in the limbo of the unpublished. In any case there are memories of happier distractions than that.

A good deal of a later novel was written while a baby son played with his toy bricks at my feet in a sunny house (an air raid ten years later left nothing of that house save the basement) on the shoulder of Sydenham Hill, backing on to a little park, with a remarkable view over Kent, which, with the jays resting close by, was nearly as distracting as the baby. There are still jays there, in their very satisfactory colouring, and owls as well.

The final distraction has an intricate history dating back to the period before those sunny years, back to the days of the lean and hungry young man writing novel No. 3.

The beginnings of a plot formed themselves in my mind in one of the drearier sections of Dulwich, somewhere near the intersection of Barry Road and Underhill Road. Each of those impersonal little houses sheltered behind its blank windows hopes and passions and despair. There grew up in my mind the thought of a pathetic little man—a bank clerk—forced by circumstances into crime, into actual murder. He lived in one of those little houses, and to conceal his crime he buried his visitor in the little backyard of that house, just the sort of backyard one could peep into from the top of a bus in Barry Road. What would happen to him then?

I wrote the novel and entitled it *Payment Deferred* (it was just the sort of cheerless book a cheerless young man would write), and the things that happened to that novel right from the start seemed to presage its later fantastic history. There was publisher trouble and agent trouble, and when finally it appeared—a full two years after it was written—the General Strike started within the week and killed it stone dead, to all appearances, as far as any public interest was concerned.

But it revived, miraculously. People bought it, and people talked about it. There was a question of making a play of it—perfectly fantastic, of course, and yet it happened. There was a question of producing the play—still more fantastic, and yet there it was, in rehearsal, and then there came a fashionable first night at the St. James's Theatre. The principal part was played by a rising young actor; his name was Charles Laughton.

When the West End run was completed it was decided to produce the play in New York, with Laughton making his American début in the same part, and then Metro bought the film rights and Laughton moved on to Hollywood, while I settled down to write the full version of *The African Queen*.

It was not to be finished without distraction. The telephone rang—Hollywood was calling me. So the story which had been first discussed in a telephone box at Sydenham Hill Station was finished in a swaying cabin in the old Aquitania.

And it was after that, lotus-eating in a dilatory ship, that I first began to think about a character called Captain Hornblower.

That is the way one thing leads to another. Once there was a little boy walking along Peckham Road with his nose in a book; and there was a gaunt young man striding through the toll gate in College Road with his head whirling with plots. One of these days, maybe, there will be a senile old man with his vague mind misty with a thousand pictures of the past.

Perhaps, at that time, some other little boy will have his nose in one of the old dotard's books, which might afford some gratification to the old dotard in question if he could know about it.

THE END

CHANCE—3

There is no chance which does not return.

French Proverb

The most 'orangey' of orange drinks

Into this grand new drink goes the goodness of whole oranges, ripened to juicy perfection in the Mediterranean sun. Never before has there been an orange drink that captured so completely the flavour of this gloriously refreshing fruit. Get a bottle today ; add about four parts water to one part Orange Smash and the result will be a smash hit with every member of the family. 3/3d A BOTTLE.

ROBINSON'S

Orange Smash

FROM ROBINSON'S OF BARLEY WATER FAME

CVS-14

It's the unseen part that keeps shoes smart

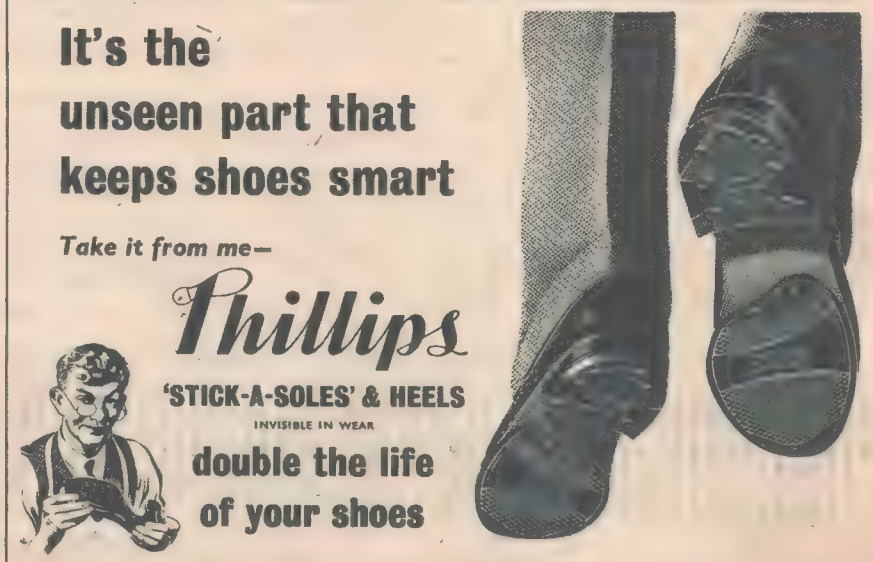
Take it from me—

Phillips

'STICK-A-SOLES' & HEELS

INVISIBLE IN WEAR

double the life of your shoes



Champions in the sky

Continued from page 17

prison," he says, "but for the international fascination of pigeons."

In 1946 King emerged from the hold of a cargo ship after an uncomfortable passage through the Bay of Biscay to find a civic reception awaiting him at Bordeaux Harbour. Cheering crowds of local fanciers had gathered to see him bring the first postwar convoy of English pigeons to France. "The welcome could not have been bigger," he says, "if I had been a one-man army liberating the town from the Germans all over again."

Equipped with churns of water, sacks of corn and a miniature first-aid kit, King lives, eats and sleeps with his pigeons throughout journeys of many hundreds of miles. He was once travelling by air in bad weather when the fuselage door flew open. Although the plane was lurching heavily, he walked over to the doorway, grabbed the flapping door, and closed it. "That was a dangerous thing to do without a parachute," said the pilot afterwards. King confessed that he had not thought about that. "The roar of the slipstream was unsettling the pigeons," he explained.

When a plane taking a convoy to Guernsey landed in a huge spray of water, King thought that it had been forced down into the sea. He pulled the baskets of pigeons towards the emergency hatch, meaning to give them a chance to escape. But a second look showed him that the plane had merely overshot the runway and come to rest in a water-logged field.

An official of the National Flying Club recently suggested that King should follow his pigeons back to England by helicopter, to see how they find their way home. "The idea was dismissed as too expensive, and so noisy that the pigeons might scatter off course," says King. "Anyway, who ever heard of a bird-watcher joining in a pigeon race?"

King rejects theories that attribute the pigeon's sense of direction to its hearing mechanism or to magnetism, and those that blame atom bombs or radar for pigeons getting lost. He thinks that it all depends on bearings taken by the birds on the sun, and he will not release his convoy unless the weather is clear. His eagerness to give pigeons a sunny start sometimes leads him into trouble.

He was once given permission to liberate his pigeons from Le Bourget Airport, near Paris, at 11.30 on an overcast morning. But when the sun broke through at 11.20 he promptly opened up, and saw them swirl across the path of an incoming airliner. The birds had time to get clear, but King was rebuked by officials. He learned that a Belgian plane had crashed three weeks earlier after hitting a swarm of pigeons prematurely released by another convoyer.

King made four attempts to liberate two thousand pigeons from Pau Aerodrome, in southern France, for last season's Grand National pigeon race. Each day the police turned up to witness the release, as required by French regulations, but each day the weather was too bad. Then, on the fifth day, the clouds cleared. This time the police were not there, but King went ahead with the liberation. After waiting in vain for the police until nightfall, he caught the boat train home. He was warned later that he would be arrested if he ever returned to France. But after writing an explanation to the Minister of the Interior, King had his convoying permit renewed.

"The timing of a release means life or death to the pigeons," he says. Birds freed too soon or too late may find themselves over water when forced down by darkness. Strong crosswinds once blew a pigeon convoyed by King out over the Atlantic. Finding refuge on a ship, it became the crew's pet and went to New York and back. The sailors released it at Southampton, and the pigeon flew straight to its loft in Manchester. Even more remarkable was the English pigeon which arrived home from a race in 1955, six months late and carrying a message from an American soldier in Korea. "It probably went there on a troopship," says King. "But as there is an almost unbroken land mass between Korea and Britain, it could have flown all the way back."

Flying with the wind, pigeons have reached speeds of more than 2,700 yards a minute—92 m.p.h. King's plane was about to take off after a mass release in France last year when someone sprinted on to the runway with a pigeon which had been injured by nearby telegraph wires. King took the bird and, on landing outside London, went by taxi to Paddington Station. There he put the injured bird on a fast train to its owner at Oxford. It duly reached home—but some minutes after its loftmates, which had used their own wings to get back.

One of the pigeons from King's own loft travelled at high speed to return from Mirande, in south-east France, one sunny afternoon in 1938. But, despite all his desperate coaxing, it lingered on the roof for ten minutes before slipping casually into the finishing trap. King hurried to take a rubber identity ring from one of the bird's legs, and dropped it inside the special clock which records the exact time of this operation. Race officials could then see how long the bird had taken over the journey, and so compare its average speed with that of other pigeons covering varying distances to other lofts. King's bird was the second fastest, and just failed to win the King George V Cup.

"Those ten minutes," says King, "cost me the trophy, many hundreds of pounds in prize money, and even more in breeding value. Since then I have never let myself worry about the waywardness of a pigeon."

A few years ago, his coolness saved the National Flying Club organizers a complete day's work and £100 starting expenses. There were four thousand entries for the race. From dawn to late evening, King helped to mark each bird as an official starter. But, as the marking was finished, a pigeon slipped from its basket. If it had flown away, the remaining 3,999 would have needed re-marking differently, to disqualify the early starter. As panic-stricken officials cursed their luck, King calmly stalked the pigeon from behind, and grabbed it before it could take off.

King, who has handled pigeons for most of his sixty years, has been a convoyer since 1946. From 1914 to 1918 he served with regiments which used pigeons for regular communication.

During the last war he looked after pigeons with which the Ministry of Food planned to link ration dumps, if there was an invasion. He worked from the top of a block of offices in Portman Square, London. While civil servants patrolled the roof on fire-watching duty during the blitz, he sat in the lofts trying to maintain the morale of the O.H.M.S. pigeons.

The small air-charter firms which developed in the immediate postwar years often offered cheap rates for pigeon convoying. King was once flying to Amsterdam when the pilot shouted back from the cockpit: "I can't afford to have a navigator on my payroll, and the weather is thickening up. You're a pigeon man, so you should be able to find the way."

King went forward and under his directions the plane eventually reached Amsterdam.

"The pilot was very impressed," he says, "but all I did was wait for the Belgian coast to appear below, and then say: 'turn left.' Even then, it was a piece of navigation no pigeon could match. They can only *return* to a place—and I had never been to Amsterdam before." THE END

MY BROTHER David

EVEN at a very early age David was a grubby little boy who was likely to produce a frog from his trouser pocket at the most inopportune moment. As far back as I can remember, he was fascinated by animals and kept tropical fish, guinea pigs and snakes.

His favourite pet was a salamander. Its main diet was worms, which David collected from the garden and then stored in father's old tobacco tins.

Our father was Principal of University College, Leicester. One day he came home in a rage. Apparently he had offered his tobacco tin round to some important colleagues and was surprised when all of them politely but firmly declined. When Father began to light his own pipe, to his horror he found his fingers in a decaying mass of worms.

When I was ten and David was eight, I arranged a full-scale concert. David supported the idea when I agreed that the proceeds should go to the R.S.P.C.A., but I had great difficulty in dragging him away from his snakes and fish to make him rehearse.

We invited the Lord Mayor of Leicester to be our guest of honour. Unfortunately, something went wrong with the timing. The first half of the concert lasted for two hours and everybody, especially the Lord Mayor, was exhausted. On my father's insistence, rapid and drastic cuts were made in the second half, and in the end the concert was a great success. It raised, I remember, £11 17s. 4d.

At school, David showed remarkable talent for making money. Once his class was very worried about a practical zoology examination, as it had had little practice in dissection. David worked out that the only animals they were likely to have to dissect were dog-fish, cray-fish or frogs.

One day, while passing the science laboratory, he noticed stacks of little boxes marked "Zoology Practical" on the master's desk. They were the dissecting material for the examination. The boxes seemed too small for dog-fish and, when he shook one, it rattled, so he guessed that they contained cray-fish, not frogs.

He bicycled off quickly to a stream he knew outside Leicester and caught dozens of cray-fish which he sold to his classmates. The whole form practised the cray-fish dissections dozens of times, and they all got distinctions in practical zoology.

WHO IS THIS FAMOUS BROTHER? See page 35

The perfect Miss Twill

Continued from page 9

breeding them there?" he inquired politely. "You have a prize specimen you wish to show me, perhaps?"

Mr. Parkinson tried to look rational. "They're a pest," he said, feeling that there was a sporting chance of finding a bird or two.

"Hah!" the Chief said nastily.

Mr. Parkinson had a brainwave. "They stop customers coming into the store."

That did it. The Chief made off towards the roof like a plump bloodhound. Anything that might interfere with the takings upset him profoundly. Mr. Parkinson followed weakly behind.

Puffing after his climb, the Chief emerged on to the roof. Mr. Parkinson peered anxiously around in search of some wild life. Two lack-lustre sparrows hopped wearily away.

"Well?" said the Chief ominously.

"They've gone," Mr. Parkinson said. "Over there," he added thankfully, pointing.

The Chief looked across the street. A handful of pigeons on the roof of a grocer's shop looked inquiringly back at him.

"Hm." The Chief was not convinced.

By Mr. Parkinson's watch it was seven minutes before they descended. Nineteen minutes to go.

"I'm sure you want some refreshment," he said hopefully.

The Chief didn't answer. He just walked on purposefully. Wiatt said to Parkinson: "What on earth's the matter with you?"

Mr. Parkinson ignored him. He trotted anxiously after the Chief, who was disappearing down the stairs. If he could only keep the old ruffian on the upper sales floor he might be all right. Fewer people got up there anyway.

Sourly, the Chief walked round the counters, while Mr. Parkinson counted off the seconds. Fifteen minutes to go; twelve minutes to go, and still the Chief continued his interminable prowling. For the first time, Mr. Parkinson was grateful for the old man's fantastic attention to detail.

Ten minutes. Eight minutes. Mr. Parkinson began to perspire.

Then, abruptly, the Chief about-turned. "Downstairs," he said.

Electrified, Mr. Parkinson grabbed him by the elbow and dragged him in the opposite direction. "Want you to see our new peg board," he burbled, standing the Chief up facing a wall.

"What about it?"

"You can't really see it when it's on the wall," chattered Mr. Parkinson, seizing the board and wrenching it brutally from its fastening. It came adrift in a small shower of plaster. The Chief yelped, and ran his finger along the back of the peg board, dislodging a few small pieces of dust. "I knew it," he roared. "The whole damn store is filthy. Look at this. . . . It's disgraceful. . . ."

Mr. Parkinson let the blast carry over his left shoulder and risked a glance downstairs. It was a mistake. The Chief dodged round his back and pottered down the staircase, a determined glint in his eyes. Mr. Parkinson groaned and followed him, his eyes shut, waiting for the axe to fall.

At the bottom he counted up to ten. Nothing happened. He opened his eyes. The store was full of happy customers, contentedly clutching parcels. Three girls operated alertly on

each of the front store counters. Everything was moving smoothly and rhythmically. Miss Twill was striding efficiently about. Mr. Parkinson was utterly bewildered.

"H'm," the Chief said. He sounded disappointed.

There was something odd, something a fraction out of focus. Mr. Parkinson groped for it and couldn't find it. The Chief could.

He shot off in the direction of the knitwear counter and addressed one of the girls serving behind it, who was fumbling slightly.

"Hallo, my dear," he said, with the horrible leer which, he was convinced, put the girls at their ease. "What is your fastest selling colour in cardigans?"

The girl shook her head. "I don't know, sir."

"Then what is your best selling line in jumpers?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Why don't you know?" barked the Chief, reverting to character.

"Because I'm usually on clocks and watches," said the girl defiantly.

Mr. Parkinson was utterly lost. The Chief appeared malignantly at his elbow and said: "All right, what's the game? What's that girl doing on the wrong counter?"

Mr. Parkinson hadn't the slightest notion. He opened his mouth and willed something convincing to come out. Nothing did.

Miss Twill's voice said: "It's an idea of Mr. Parkinson's."

Mr. Parkinson could almost feel the treacherous knife slip in between his shoulder blades.

But Miss Twill had slipped up at last. The disposition of the staff was entirely her responsibility. Even the Chief would admit that. He would denounce her infamy. He started to get his words ready.

"Hah!" the Chief commented.

"Mr. Parkinson feels," Miss Twill said, "that the girls ought to get experience of other departments besides the ones they're usually on. They should be mobile, so that they can be switched around. They can then be freely utilized during sickness, holidays and peak periods such as this."

She paused to smile at the Chief. "Don't you agree?" she asked sweetly.

Mr. Parkinson realized that his mouth was hanging open. He shut it quickly.

The Chief turned to Wiatt and said angrily: "Why aren't we doing this in other stores?"

Wiatt looked startled, hurriedly produced a notebook and started to scribble in it.

"Had this in mind for some time, Parkinson," the Chief said. "Clever of you to think of it."

"It was nothing," Mr. Parkinson said modestly.

Later, when the store was closed, when the girls had gone and the porters were sweeping the floors, Mr. Parkinson stood on the pavement, holding the door of the Rolls-Royce open.

The Chief said: "I've seen worse stores. Not many, mark you. One—perhaps two."

This was the highest known praise. Mr. Parkinson said gratefully: "Thank you, sir."

The Chief said: "Next time you want to play golf on a Saturday afternoon, ring me up. I'll bet you a fiver I could break seventy-five on that course of yours."

Mr. Parkinson thought how delightful it would be to kick the old fool in the shins. He waved after the disappearing limousine and walked back into the store.

The porters had finished now and gone. Everything was hushed and quiet. He stood motionless, breathing in the peace.

A tapping sound woke him up, and he saw Miss Twill walking across the store towards him.

"Right, Miss Twill," he said. "Explanations, please. How did the girls get down on the floor when they were supposed to be at tea?"

"I phoned the City Hall early in the afternoon," she said, "just to check. They told me that the procession would be going by half an hour early, so I rearranged the tea breaks." She added demurely: "I do hope that was the right thing to do."

Mr. Parkinson digested this. "Yes," he said at length. "Now what about this switching of girls? It may be a good idea, but it certainly wasn't mine."

"My first loyalty," said Miss Twill, "is to my manager."

Mr. Parkinson realized that this was a different, softer Miss Twill. In court shoes her legs were long and slim, her severe hair-do had turned into something wavy and attractive, and the trim, figure-flattering suit bore no resemblance to her rather prim working outfit.

"Miss Twill," he said, "you're an angel."

She smiled at him happily. Mr. Parkinson was fascinated. Her lips were full and shapely, and her teeth were perfect.

"If you're like me," he said, still reeling from the impact, "you could do with a drink. What's more, you deserve one. Let's have one with some dinner, shall we?"

Mr. Parkinson locked the store up behind them. "My name, by the way," he said, "is Robert."

"Mine is Rosemary," said Miss Twill.

Rosemary, thought Mr. Parkinson, was a very pretty name. The Twill part spoiled it though.

Whoa, he told himself, as he began to cross the road. *It's early days yet. . . .*

Which, taking into account the pleasant things that might transpire, was a very nice thought. THE END

LEAVES FROM Starke's HOLIDAY GUIDE BOOK

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If you want your hair to look better, *healthier*—ask for new Vaseline Hair Cream today!

Look for the jar with the green cap

prepared from vitamin-ised oils

The Golden Lantern

Continued from page 22

tallied with the story I had given earlier. Watkins produced two cups of tea, while the statement was prepared for my signature. Then he asked blandly if anything further had occurred to Elva.

"I've nothing to say beyond what Mr. Cradford's told you," she said.

Watkins nodded. Then he said, addressing us both: "Any objection to our having your dabs?"

During the process, a humiliating one, Elva's eyes kept flickering doubtfully in my direction. I could see she was frightened.

"One has to do these things," the inspector said regretfully.

"Inspector," I said, "since we left you on Languish Island I've been thinking things over. Also, I've been to the hotel on Chanter's Wharf and had a long talk with Vanessa Chalmers. You might be interested to know that Ollett went there, too, yesterday. And that shortly afterwards Malin and Reardon took a cruise."

"It was a pleasant day for the river," he said.

"In your eyes, our two friends are such blameless characters that it's probably a waste of time pointing out the interesting possibilities. Ollett took the long way round to Languish Island—but Malin could have walked over the dunes to Barnwell's landing-stage in a matter of minutes."

"Quite true," Watkins murmured politely. He was negligently examining our smudged prints.

I didn't seem to be getting anywhere, so I changed my ground. I said abruptly: "Inspector, what do you know of Norman Hurwood?"

Watkins dropped the prints and stared at me. He said: "I don't think I remember the name."

I said: "Norman Hurwood knows more about guided missiles than most men in this country. He was at Abercefn till he disappeared a few days ago——"

"Abercefn is a long way from here," Watkins said, his mouth pursed.

"That's what Elva thought when she saw him with Warren Chalmers."

The inspector turned to Elva. "I think you'd better tell me about that, Miss Peterson," he said.

ELVA told him, and I watched his face. When she had finished, I said: "We seem to be under suspicion of something. I'm not sure what, and I don't think you are. But there's one question I'm entitled to ask. Have you any idea *why* Warren Chalmers was killed?"

He hesitated, then said reluctantly: "To be frank, no."

"Then listen to me and I'll tell you what happened this afternoon at The Golden Lantern."

I took ten minutes over it, adding the information I'd had from Spencer Millworth.

"It's all very interesting, Mr. Cradford," Watkins said when I'd finished. "But where does it take us? No farther than we were before."

"It takes *me* farther," I said. "I'm certain that Hurwood's in that house—so certain that I'll give you a warning, Inspector. If you decide to act on what I've told you, be careful. Rouse their suspicions and they'll kill Hurwood before you can get within yards of him."

The warning went home. Watkins went to the window and gazed out at the street. Then he said curtly, over his shoulder: "Get back to Swallow."

The inspector didn't offer us the use of his car, so we walked back to the quay.

We went straight to Swallow. Maybe I was getting pernickety, but I searched the boat while Elva was making fast. I wanted to make sure no one had come aboard in our absence and was waiting for a chance to quieten us the way Chalmers had been quietened.

When Elva came into the cabin, I said: "We're in a jam, Elva. They've found fingerprints on Flirtation they're not sure about. Most likely they're some of ours which we overlooked. And

Watkins isn't going to swallow all this about Hurwood so easily. He may think it's a smoke screen to cover ourselves."

"He won't dare ignore a lead like that," she said.

I thought it over. "He'll probably pass the baby to the Yard. It's getting too big for him."

The splutter of an outboard motor was coming nearer. I glanced through the window and saw Commander Barnwell heading towards us. When he came aboard, things in Swallow's cabin were decidedly cramped.

"I don't believe in beating about the bush," Barnwell said. "I'd a long talk with Watkins after you left last night. He thinks Ollett died because he was the only one out of the lot of us who knew the way Chalmers was killed."

"And how was he killed?" I asked.

"Chalmers was dead before ever Flirtation came into the Mel on her homeward run from Languish Island."

"But that's impossible."

Elva cried: "He was seen coming ashore in the dinghy."

"It was dusk," Barnwell said. "And he would be some distance away."

"You mean it was——"

"It was someone else. Someone who fooled everybody except Ollett." The commander helped himself to some of the coffee Elva had just made. "I'm giving you the gist of what Watkins told me. He doesn't know why Malin killed Chalmers. That's the main snag. But it ties up with that letter Chalmers wrote you."

"Go on," I said.

"Chalmers had to die before he talked to you about it. When he came to see me, Malin followed him. He stowed away aboard Flirtation till she was heading towards Melhaven again. Then he came out and smacked Chalmers over the head with a bottle."

"But Chalmers was lying. . . ." Elva began.

"Ah! So you did go aboard Flirtation before the police got there. Well, that's a detail. Just as you were going to say, Chalmers was lying in the saloon, near that fancy cocktail bar, everything fixed to look as if he'd been having a drink with a friend. Watkins says that's where Malin put him. Clever window-dressing."

The commander wasn't used to talking so much. His tone was harsh and his words clipped and explosive. "It was getting dark," he went on, "and Malin dressed his second window. He put on Chalmers's shirt and jacket and cap and rowed ashore in the dinghy. Half a dozen people saw him, Ollett being one. Half an hour later it'd be dark enough to row back without being seen at all."

"Why did he have to go back?" I asked.

"To take the dinghy. And that's when he made his second mistake. Chalmers would never have tied the painter the way he did."

"I noticed that," Elva broke in excitedly.

The commander grunted. "So there you've got it. All this play-acting created the impression that Chalmers was alive at half-past seven—that he couldn't have died before eight or half-past, and by that time Malin would have an alibi."

"How did he get ashore the second time?" I asked.

"Most likely he towed another boat out when he returned to Flirtation in the dinghy." Barnwell leaned back, looking well-pleased with himself. "He comes ashore a second time in his own clothes. Ten more minutes and he's in the Dolphin bar. You can bet your shirt, Cradford, that Reardon and Vanessa would swear their eyes out that he'd been with 'em all afternoon and evening."

One question was burning in my brain. "So Vanessa knew her husband was to be killed?"

The commander looked at me, rubbing his chin. "You know her, Cradford. Draw your own conclusions."

"But why kill Ollett?" Elva asked, deftly changing the subject.

"Ollett was one of those who saw Malin row ashore. The others were deceived, but he wasn't. He knew Chalmers too well. He couldn't have known exactly how Chalmers was killed, but he was on the right track. That's why he came to Languish Island—to check whether Malin could have gone to the landing-stage and got aboard Flirtation without being seen from my house."

Elva shuddered. "I can't bear to think of it even now," she said.

"Trouble is, Watkins doesn't know *why* Chalmers was killed," Barnwell said. "There's something deep down, a motive so damned strong that Chalmers had to die before he talked to you."

I looked at Elva. "We gave him that motive an hour ago."

I told Barnwell about Hurwood. His heavy jaw hung open while I was talking and he nodded his great bald head emphatically when I'd done. "Yes, it all fits," he exclaimed. "Chalmers sitting pretty, making money hand over fist. Then the Malin-Reardon axis . . . this feller Hurwood . . . what a hell of a shock they'd have when he said no. That's when they'd put the screw on."

"Watkins still wants proof," I said.

"Corner 'em," said the commander. "That's when you'll get your proof. Anyway, you can leave it to him from now on."

WHEN Barnwell had gone, time seemed to drag. Just before dusk a constable arrived on the quay and, after a slow march round the waterfront, seated himself on a bollard.

"The law is watching over us," Elva said.

I wondered what Watkins was doing. Barnwell had said we could leave it to him, but in these matters the police often arrived too late. And I was reluctant to let go of things at this stage of the game.

Elva said: "Do you think they'll try to get Hurwood away, Mark?"

I said: "If they're going to, they'd better move fast. I'm going to have a shot at getting him out myself."

There was no time to be lost. They might move out tonight, if they thought the game was nearly up, and they might take Hurwood with them. The police had Flirtation now, but there was Reardon's cutter. Would they try to use that, or would Reardon get in touch with his own yacht out there in the Roads and tell them to send a boat?

Elva nervously clenched her hands. "Mark—please don't go. I don't think you're doing this because of Norman Hurwood."

"I'm doing it partly for Warren Chalmers's ghost," I told her.

"And partly because you've been nursing an old dream all these years and now the bottom's fallen right out of it." Elva pulled on her duffel coat. "Anyway, I'm coming with you."

"You can come a little way," I said.

Few people were about ashore. No one even gave us a glance as we crossed the cobbles. Elva stopped and turned. "Mark, face it," she said. "You can't expect to do more single-handed than the police. And face something else. Vanessa's deep, deep in all this. She——"

"We'll talk about that tomorrow," I said, trying to avoid those grey eyes.

Suddenly she smiled and put her arms round my neck. She said: "I think you're a fool to take a risk like this just so that Vanessa comes out of it with clean hands. But I'm glad you're doing it." She kissed me then, a strangely passionate kiss that stirred some depth in me which had never been stirred before. Then she said softly: "Good luck, Mark."

I left her on the next corner, and followed the road I'd taken earlier in the day, to that wooded hill beyond and above The Golden Lantern. I gained the high ground and was soon among the trees, tearing my hands and face on dense thickets of thorn and brambles before coming to a high wall. I managed to scale it, and jarred my leg badly getting down the other side.

Lights were burning in most of the hotel rooms. Only the disused older wing was in complete darkness. If Hurwood was in that old wing, as I suspected, he was sitting in the dark. Or—was there a faint glow of light from one of the upper windows, as if

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MY BROTHER DAVID

See page 32

David Attenborough, the TV producer, is the brother of Richard Attenborough

Go on—
spoil yourself!

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4D

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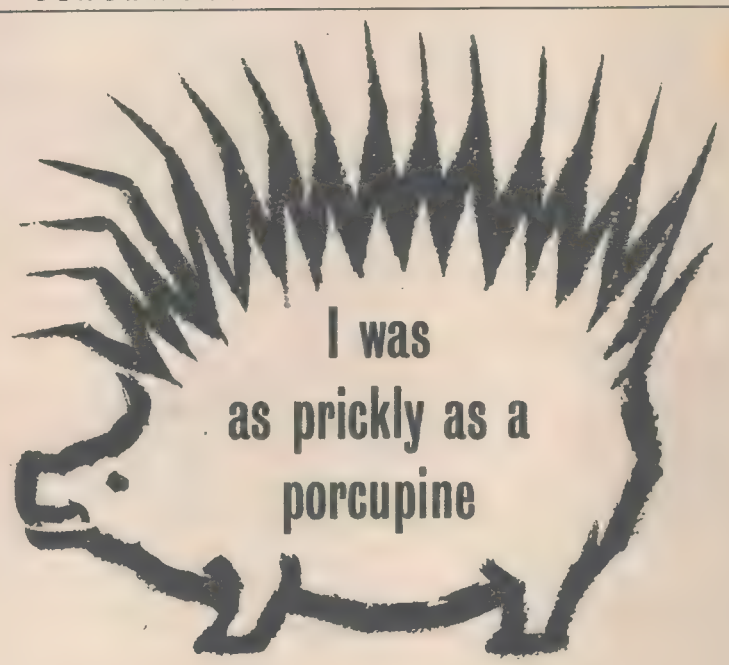

Everybody seemed to be trying to annoy me, and most of them succeeded. But I was persuaded to take D.C.L. Yeast Tablets. Now things go smoothly. All because I now have enough Vitamin B1. If you find things trying, try 'em!

D C L YEAST TABLETS
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CPH 5/56A

a small bulb was burning behind thick curtains or a blind?

Yes. One room in all that wing had a light in it. One among all the rest.

A broad and well-kept path led through the gardens to the hotel, and I could see a side door. If it was open, there was no point in slouching through like a burglar. I felt I had a fair chance of passing as an ordinary customer at least until I was through that door.

I walked smartly forward. The door was open. I went into a long, cream-washed corridor. There was a service staircase to my left. I hurried up it to the first floor. The corridor was lit by a single unshaded bulb.

On my left were four almost identical doors. I tried the first, but it was locked. So was the second. But the third opened. A subdued light greeted me as I pushed it back.

It was another of those anti-climactic moments. I was in a comfortably furnished room, with a small fire burning in an old-fashioned grate. A man was sitting in a wing-chair with his feet on another chair, a book in his hand.

"Mr. Hurwood?" I said, half expecting him to say no, that his name was Brown and he came from Edinburgh.

"I'm Hurwood, yes. Has Joel sent you?"

I SHUT the door behind me and took a step forward. "No, Joel hasn't sent me," I said. "You'd better listen—I've only got a few seconds. I'm not arguing with you about your beliefs, but if there's any cause on earth worth deserting your wife and children and betraying your country for, I wouldn't know what it is. You——"

"It isn't betrayal, it isn't desertion," he said calmly, as though we had been discussing the subject for hours. "There are other children besides mine, other wives besides mine."

I nodded. "Have it your own way, but get this. Two men have died this week because you've come here. And Joel's a crooked thug."

"I've known Joel a long time," Hurwood said. "He's a man I'm proud to be associated with. You'll be slandering Ross next."

"I'm even prepared to do that," I said. "Ross is a professional murderer."

He smiled, filling his pipe and slowly shaking his head. "I don't know who you are or why you're here," he said. "I can only assume that, whoever you are, you're slightly unbalanced. . . ."

I didn't hear the door open. A crushing weight descended on my head; there was a great noise in my ears and blackness in front of my eyes. . . .

I must have been unconscious most of the night. And the awakening was even more startling than the blow that had knocked me out.

My head was lying against something soft. A voice was murmuring in my ear, and gentle fingers were stroking my hair. There was a dim light as if dawn was breaking.

"Mark. . . ." Elva's voice came from far, far away. "Mark, darling—you're all right now. I'm here with you. It's me—it's Elva."

My head rocked with pain, but I put my hands round her neck and pressed her mouth closer.

"I followed you," she whispered. "I was near you all the while."

My brain was only ticking over very slowly. "Where are we?" I asked.

"It's a tumbledown old shed near the lock gates. They brought you over the footbridge. They tied your hands and feet, Mark. I unfastened the ropes."

"Hurwood's in there," I said. "I saw him. I was talking to him when I got this."

I felt the back of my head. Then I managed to get to my knees. Elva helped me to stand upright, but I reeled against the side of the shed. I knew I couldn't make it.

"It's up to you," I said. "Get Watkins. Tell him I'm here and Hurwood's here and that I'm probably going to die unless he moves quickly."

"I don't want to leave you," Elva said.

"You've got to. Put these ropes back round my wrists and ankles again—lightly. I'm going to stay alive till you get back, somehow."

In that ghostly light, filtering through the cracks of the old wooden building, I could see her lips quivering as she bent over me, winding the ropes loosely round my wrists and ankles.

She left me then, and I felt very much alone. Time passed. The daylight grew strong enough for me to see the interior of the shed clearly. I thought I could expect Elva back within half an hour.

I eased myself into a more comfortable position, but even as I was doing so I heard footsteps outside and the sound of a key turning. The door opened, and there was Gribble, wearing a heavy coat, bulking against a sky already shot with crimson.

At once I shammed unconsciousness. He lifted my bound ankles, dragged me out of the shed, across the wharf, and dumped me within a foot of the edge. Without even glancing at me, he ambled back towards the buildings.

It was then that I had the biggest surprise of my life.

Flirtation was lying there, only a few feet from where Gribble had dropped me. A couple of planks, forming a rough gangway, reached from her deck to the wharf. There was a bank of evil mud between her and the wall. By some luck or devilry they had managed to get hold of Chalmers's boat and bring her into the basin.

Then I saw Malin approaching with Hurwood. They crossed the gangway, but Malin didn't stay aboard. He came back and joined Gribble, giving him a hand with a heavy box. I took a wary glance at Hurwood while this was going on. He looked an uncomfortable man. He was staring at his shoes, but I don't think he was seeing them.

Next Reardon appeared with Vanessa and Rita Malin. They each carried two suitcases. It looked like a final exit.

Seeing Vanessa with Reardon gave me a sick feeling in my stomach. She wore a long, off-white coat with a scarf over her dark hair. There was a difference in her, a kind of arrogance I hadn't been aware of before. She spoke sharply to Ross Malin, and to my surprise he replied almost obsequiously.

I didn't understand it. She put the suitcase down and came towards me. She pushed my head round with her foot, apparently taking it for granted that I was still out for the count.

"Get him on board," she said. Gribble and Malin stooped over me and I was unceremoniously carried across the two planks. They dumped me on the deck close to where Hurwood was standing.

Vanessa didn't follow. When I opened my eyes again she was gazing towards the lock gates. "I don't like it, Joel," she said. "I don't like risks as big as this."

"You're leaving nothing behind that matters," he said grimly. "And it's a bigger risk to stay."

"What about Cradford?"

I winced at the icy callousness of her tone and that unnatural use of my surname.

"He can go over the side when we're well out in the Roads," Reardon said, "with enough weight to take him down where he'll not come up again."

I couldn't see him, or Vanessa, and Hurwood's head was turned away. All I could see was Hurwood's hand. The knuckles were white. This was an odd situation for a man like him to find himself in.

Hurwood shifted slightly, and I could see the saloon where Chalmers had died. Vanessa was talking again, but I scarcely heard her. Rocking through my brain was the fact that this boat wasn't Flirtation at all, but a replica of Chalmers's boat in almost every detail. . . . Or every outward detail, for now, straining my eyes to look into the saloon from that oblique angle, I could see that there was no luxurious carpet, no table or comfortable chairs. Somehow, it tied up with Chalmers's success in getting his stuff out of the country over such a long period.

Malin and his wife came up the gangway. "How much longer now?" Vanessa asked.

"Not long."

I supposed they were waiting till the water in the river rose to the height of that in the basin.

Vanessa was lighting a cigarette. I caught the drift of its acrid smoke. Joel Reardon was pulling back his sleeve to look at his watch. The wretched Rita Malin was huddled in the shelter of the deckhouse. . . .

And then it happened. There was an appalling crash, a shattering of glass, an impact that shook the boat. I jerked my head round. The forward window on the port side was smashed, the corner pillar buckled, the instrument panel a tangle of broken dials. Over the wheel dangled the hunk of rusty, twisted iron that had done the damage.

Of all things, it was a night watchman's old fire brazier. Hurled from the wharf above, it had been helped on its destructive way by gravity, and luck might have directed it towards that strategic target. . . .

But Elva wasn't depending on luck or gravity now. She was covering us all with her brother's gun, and at that distance she couldn't have missed.

"Don't move," she said, "any one of you."

No one did move. But Malin, in the first moment's confusion, had backed down the steps and was crouching in the saloon.

"Come out of it, Malin," Elva said.

He didn't come out. The gun roared twice, smashing the remaining windows on the port side. He was down on his knees, but he hadn't been hit. And he was moving towards a locker. . . .

It was Hurwood who acted, while I was still on one knee, trying to drag myself upright. He picked up the heavy pigskin bag he had brought and flung it through the smashed window. It took a good area of jagged glass with it and hit Malin full in the stomach.

For a moment I saw Malin's face, contorted with pain and fear—the fear of a killer caught for once without weapons. Then he collapsed across the locker. I saw Reardon's right hand move down and then Elva's gun roared again and he fell over the side into the mud, trumpeting with pain. He began to drag himself towards the wall, trailing a shattered leg.

"That's for Ollett," Elva said. Then, as I limped towards her across the two planks, she said: "Take this gun, darling." Her voice was very shaky. "I've never handled it before." Beyond the hotel, police whistles were screeching.

"I phoned the police," Elva said. "I'll go and fetch them here. Keep this lot covered, Mark. Especially Malin. Maybe he'll try something."

She ran swiftly along the wharf and over the lock gates.

Vanessa lit another cigarette. She said in a detached voice: "Well, Mark, we've come a long way, haven't we?"

I didn't speak. She turned her back on me and walked slowly towards the bows of the yacht. She stood there motionless, looking at the gates and the river.

Two cars slewed into the forecourt of the hotel and uniformed figures came running towards the basin. Watkins was among them. He was the first to reach me. "Put that gun away," he said testily. "I don't feel safe, the way you're handling it."

Vanessa chose that moment to jump. She hit the water with a loud splash. I saw her head and shoulders come up, then she seemed to twist round and disappear.

"Careful!" Watkins shouted. A constable was stripping off his tunic. "There's fifteen feet of water against those gates."

I turned away, cold and sick. The minutes went by. Watkins was staring grimly at the basin. They hadn't found her. They wouldn't, now. I knew that.

It was a short trip back to Swallow in the police car, and Watkins talked all the time.

"I appreciated that advice of yours about inquiring into Reardon's past—and Malin's," he said. "But I'd been doing that a long time—ever since Geoffrey Peterson was sent to prison, in fact." He coughed meaningly. "This may be unpalatable to you, Mr. Cradford, but all these months of inquiry led me to believe that the spider at the centre of the web was Vanessa Chalmers."

—I glanced at Elva. She was next to me in the car. I could feel her body warm and soft against me, but she was looking through the window.

"Unless I'm mistaken," he went on, "greed was her downfall. I believe her insatiable lust for money ruined her husband and sent him down the road that led to his death."

We were almost at Swallow now.

"There's a lot of sifting to do yet," Watkins said, "but I don't think our

Your Garden and Mine

by PERCY THROWER

FOR several years after I planted a standard apple tree, an Ellison's Orange, it showed no signs of bearing fruit, although it grew quite freely. I thought that if I could pull down the branches to horizontal level there would be more chance of a crop.

From each branch I hung a log just heavy enough to bring it down to the desired position. I left the logs on the tree until the following year when there was enough fruit to keep the branches down. Now I have a nicely open-shaped tree which fruits regularly each year.—MISS K. H. WATKINS, Bank Drive, Shrewsbury.

I have found that I get a better crop of runner beans if, when planting, I also sow a thin row of mignonette in between the rows of sticks. — MISS Y. BRIGHT, Queen's Road, West Croydon.

PERCY THROWER says: Many apple trees become unfruitful as a result of over-pruning in the summer when the young growths are cut back. It has been proved by horticultural research that these shoots will bear fruit if tied down below the horizontal. Bending them has the effect of restricting the flow of sap and encouraging fruit buds.

The strong scent of mignonette will undoubtedly attract bees and so help in the pollination of runner bean flowers.

JOHN BULL pays five guineas each for the best original, topical gardening hints sent to Percy Thrower, JOHN BULL, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. No entry can be returned unless a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

CHANCE—4

There is no such thing as chance. We have invented this word to express the known effect of every unknown cause.

Voltaire

case will undergo much change. Flirtation was built by an Essex firm. A practically identical boat from the same yard came into the market a couple of years ago and was snapped up by Chalmers. Without going into details, you can imagine the tricks he could play with the two of them, the changes he could ring. But Malin found out what he was doing and so did Commander Barnwell. Then came Reardon's demands. And when Chalmers wrote to you, he became a menace to Reardon and Malin that had to be removed."

I was trying to listen, but I was seeing the water by the lock gates, the swirls and eddies as Vanessa went down.

"Only the details need filling in," Watkins said. "Chalmers's murder during the homeward run from Languish Island, the masquerade as Chalmers to give the impression that he was alive at that time, the attempt on your life because they didn't know how much he had told you."

"I wonder how they knew that Chalmers had written to me?" I said.

"Chalmers unthinkingly asked his wife for your address. I got that from Reardon."

MY brain was clearing now. "And Ollett died because he spotted Malin rowing ashore. . . . Yes, it all fits."

We bumped across the cobbles. Melhaven looked serene and beautiful in the early light.

"The thing that hits me," I said, "is Vanessa's knowing her husband was going to be murdered."

"He was going to give the game away—and she was in love with Reardon. She wanted Chalmers dead anyway."

The car had stopped. "I only hope," I said, still thinking of Vanessa, "that they don't wriggle out of it on some technicality."

"They won't." Watkins was confident. "There's a lot of evidence to go into yet."

"So it's all over," I said.

"In one sense. I'd like you to call at the police station this afternoon, Mr. Cradford. There'll be two inquests—three, I'm afraid. And your previous statement will have to be considerably revised, won't it?"

The car turned up Brandy Staithe. Elva and I watched it go. There was no hurry now.

I turned and looked down at Swallow. I said: "It'll seem funny not to see her any more."

"Maybe you will," Elva said. "I'll never part with her. She isn't mine, anyway. She belongs to Geoff. So any time . . . any time you're round this way again. . . ." She stopped, shaking her head.

"Well?" I said.

"It doesn't matter. I was going to say, look me up, and I'll open a can of something and make coffee, for old time's sake."

I pulled her round by the hood of her coat, making her face me. I said roughly: "When I came here the other night, I didn't know what I was letting myself in for. Three people have died since then, but I'm glad I came. Elva, will you marry me?"

"There's Vanessa," she whispered. "There's Vanessa's ghost."

"The world stopped revolving around Vanessa the first time I ever saw you."

She looked up slowly. "Mark, if you're just saying that to be nice. . . ."

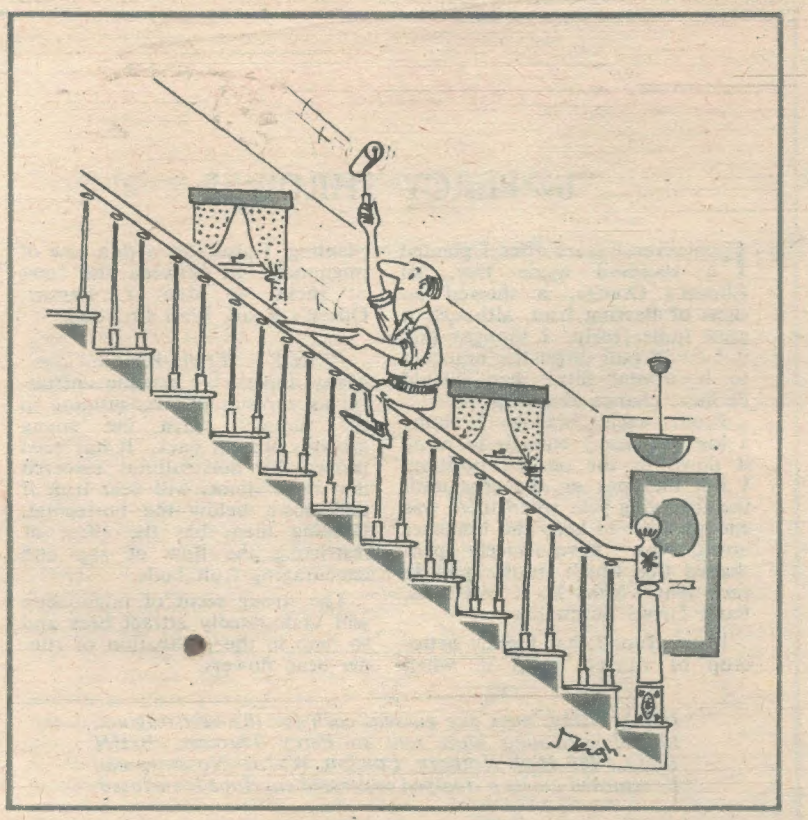
"I'm past trying to be nice. I'm just telling you that I'd rather have you, duffel coat and old slacks and dirty face, than Vanessa and all she ever was."

"It's not always dirty." There was a faint glint of mischief in her eyes again. "There hasn't seemed much time to wash this week, that's all."

"I don't want to go back alone," I said.

"You mean that?" She put her arms round my neck. "You really do mean it, Mark? Because if you do—oh, darling!"

We clambered down that crazy, swaying ladder to Swallow's deck. I knew there wasn't a can of beans left in the galley and the oil was finished, but I didn't care. I didn't care a damn. THE END



Daughter of Greengarth

Continued from page 15

the job. Whin How would burn like a furnace. With the undergrowth dry as tinder the flames would get a real grip. Thousands of blackened whin stems might be left, but burning turns them brittle, and a man with a stick could snap off the lot in a few hours. Whin How was going to provide some nibbling for sheep next year.

He stopped by the west base of the how, dipped his rag, lit it and went along dabbing the flame at the fringes of the undergrowth. By setting the place alight against the direction of the wind, the fire should advance more slowly and ensure more complete burning. But the tindery dryness must have been akin to a trail of gunpowder. Orange flame leaped forward, a regular river of fire crackling and flowing along the fringes and encircling the whole base of the how in half a minute. It was a wonderful, terrifying sight.

I watched the writhing, spitting crimson and yellow and the twining clouds of smoke above. That smoke was almost masking the rocky snout, but not quite. The figure of a girl was standing on it, outlined against the sky. It was Nance.

I made a choking sound, dashed through the home field gate and ran like a maniac for Whin How. I could see her trying to get down and being driven back by the searing heat. And her father, standing below a spur of the how, never knew she was there.

Never knew? Nay, how could he have known, how could anybody have known? Those young lovers had chosen their secret trysting place only too well. It was not for the rest of us to have guessed that they often met in that granite cup, going there singly under cover of the whins, and that today Nance had left her girl friend directly after dinner, returned by the screened path along the river bank and gone up the how to wait for Jimmie.

Lungs aching, the breath sobbing out of me, I tore up to Lorton. He stared at me in bewilderment as I grabbed him by the arm, dragged him clear of the spur and pointed upwards. He had just a second's glimpse of Nance staggering back over the lip of the granite cup, and I hope I never see such a dreadful look in any man's face again. Then he plunged forward, bent on the utterly hopeless purpose of fighting his way up through the fire to save her.

I caught his shoulders and heaved him back against me. He yelled: "Let me go. D'ye hear? I'll——"

"You can't. There isn't a chance. You'd be burned alive before you'd covered ten yards." I had to yell the words. Beside the volleys of crackling and hissing there was the drumming roar of the great fire.

He fought to free himself, and I hung on, struggling to edge him towards the west skirt of the how, still yelling at him. "Come on, man—this side. There's more rock. Mebbe we can open a way."

He heard me. We ran along the curve to where the base of the how came down near the river bank. Beyond us a sprinkling of frightened chaffinches dipped and darted away in cooler air, and up above a buzzard was soaring and screaming.

My guess had been right, but only in part. Though the boulders themselves lessened the extent of the furnace, the narrowest barrier of flame was a full thirty yards and up to twenty feet high. It still had to reach the topmost section of the whins. Below, where we stood, the flames had already passed on and left angry, smouldering embers.

CHANCE—5

Chance is perhaps the pseudonym of God when He did not want to sign.

Anatole France

Nance was on the snout of rock, again trying to come down.

"Lass! Oh, my lass!" cried Lorton.

A swirl of smoke hid her. It blew aside, and she was gone. Lorton gave a broken groan, and I said: "She'll be back on yon rock, lying flat. All we can do is follow the flames."

A slender, leafless rowan grew close by, in the softer earth by the trod of the river bank. Lorton tore off his coat, flung it aside, wrenched the rowan out by the roots and went scrambling up among the embers, flailing the rowan at the nearest wall of flame.

I joined him, stamping with my nailed boots, trying to kick the flaring stuff aside. It was impossible to do much. The heat scorched inside my chest like gusts from an oven. The sweat was running out of Lorton's hair and down his grimed face, drying up in the heat before it reached his throat. We were so close to the inferno that our brows were singed and an intense pricking stabbed our eyeballs.

His lips opened on a croaking shout. "Hang on, lass. We'll get to tha. Hang on."

I think in those minutes his mind became unhinged. We had no hope of getting to her. We could only follow behind the flames, beating at them. She might still be alive—but once the topmost ring of whins caught and flared, how could flesh and blood survive the appalling heat closing about that tiny platform of rock? I began to imagine what it would be like up there, and shrank from the picture in my mind.

A small holly among the whins went off with the noise of a gun. Sparks streamed through the reeking smoke. The crackling and roaring waxed to a din that was deafening. Behind and between the banners of flame more banners were glaring up nearer the rock. In two or three minutes the lass was doomed, and I prayed that the end might be quick.

I believe Lorton knew it, too. For a brief space he stopped his frantic flailing and lowered his face into his hands. Despite the noise of the fire I heard the stricken jerkiness of his breathing. In such moments there is nothing a man can do but bear his agony as best he can. . . .

A voice was yelling, a man's voice. I stared down, and there along the trod by the river Jimmie Hird came running. There was no need to tell him the truth. He must have guessed already. By his staring eyes he might have been driven into the craziness that had beset Lorton. He came running with the speed of a fawn in panic, and I wished Providence could have kept him away from the final scene.

But Jimmie was far from crazy. He saw Lorton's overcoat on the ground, snatched it up, rushed with it to the river bank and jumped in. Water dripping from him, he scrambled back over the bank, raced up the charring slope of the how and reached the narrowest barrier of flame. Over his head he drew the sodden overcoat and flung himself into the furnace. Lorton, watching, made queer, meaningless movements with his hands.

We saw him, actually saw him, in the centre of the flames. He staggered a few more paces, loomed vaguely in the smoke above them and was lost to view. If he died with her—well, perhaps that was better than that one should be left. The idea crept dully across my mind. The fight with the flames had nearly exhausted mind and body.

The ring of fire was narrowing. A bit of a gully, choked with stones, offered a closer approach to the top. Lorton and I dragged our smouldering boots higher. His face had become a stunned blankness. There was a last, ferocious flaring, right up against the edges of the granite cup, a hissing halo of flame, and the heat of it had us gasping. It swept to a crescendo, wavered, ebbed down into sullen, flickering tongues. We hesitated, dreading to witness what awaited us on that rock.

Something rose above the lip of it. Jimmie was swaying to his feet. His brows had gone, and most of his hair. He had Nance in his arms.

My mouth formed the words: "Is she—?" but no sound came out of it. I dared not ask.

Jimmie began to walk towards us through the embers. He said: "She's alive. I covered her with the wet coat and pulled my jacket over my head."

His last sentence was lost on me. I could only take in those first two words.

Lorton held out his arms. Jimmie's blackened face creased into half a smile. "Nay, I can manage. We must get her back quick, an' fetch a doctor."

Nance stirred slightly. Her lids moved, and she was seeing the two of us with conscious eyes.

"I'll be all right," she whispered.

Lorton made a queer, shivering sound. "My lass! My lass!"

The girl's blistered hand slid over Jimmie's. She said dreamily, as though everything else had been forgotten: "We're going to be married. I've always loved him."

Lorton stared up at Jimmie and down at his burden. All he could do, and that in sheer sincerity, was to squeeze Jimmie's wrist and say: "I'm glad—aye, and proud." THE END

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WAY TO WIN

Here's how to shape a Bullet. First, grasp the broad idea by enjoying the latest winners. Then choose as your starting point any Example from list below. To it, add TWO, THREE or FOUR words to make the whole into a bright Bullet.

Land Of Opportunity	Fun In The Kitchen
Back To Prosperity	Thump! Thump! Thump!
Over The Mountains	Auntie Went To Ascot And
Goodbye, Old Battleship	Clank Of The Chains
Road To Bankruptcy	Intolerable
Voyage Of The Mayflower	Bang On The Target
In The Gloaming	Runaway Husband
On Whitehall's Roundabout	Sitting On The Fence
Enterprising Chap	A Mere Pittance
The Wicked Rich	Wedding In The Village

Last six Examples are incomplete: if you wish to use one, first complete it with a word of your choice—then make your Bullet as above

Sonny's Got A....., So .....'s Will
Hotchpotch Of..... Our Holiday.....
Disarmed ..... At The.....Show

EXAMPLE .....

BULLET .....

EX. .....

B. .....

EX. .....

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CAMERAS

Grand "Ful-Vue" Super Camera to each of the 20 chief winners whose successful Bullet was one of five or more on single coupon or plain-paper entry sheet.

2,091 Closing Postmark MONDAY, MAY 27

I agree to rules and enclose P.O. entry-fee at the rate of 6d. per Bullet.

Signed.....

Address.....

P.O. Value.....

No.....

ENTRY FEE 6d. PER "BULLET"

£750 "ALPS and RIVIERA" PRIZE!

Use this label to make sure of receiving on June 1 your coupon for GIANT DOUBLE HOLIDAY OFFER COMING—also for THREE more big attractions for Bullets 2,093, 2,094, 2,095 and 2,096.

Name.....

Address.....

849

STICK 2½d. STAMP HERE

NEXT WEEK **THRILLING TEST MATCH OFFER!**

HOUSEWIFE WINS £500

"BULLETS" No. 2,086—FIRST PRIZE, £500 plus Week of Surprises: Mrs. E. Sharpe, 60 Swyncombe Avenue, Ealing, London, W.5:

What Everyone Wants The "Pick"—But *Shovel*—?

£25: Mrs. A. Bertram, 22 Willowbank Crescent, Glasgow: IN THE ATOM RACE—ALL IN ONE "TRAP"! £10: E. Brewerton, Sand Lane, Wilberfoss, York: WHAT EVERYONE WANTS—*Nature's* "HYDROGEN BOMB"—SUN!

OTHER AWARDS: £9: R. Niblett, 75 Fishguard Road, Cardiff: AT CHURCH ON SUNDAY—VICAR PRAYING FOR GIMMICK? £8: M. Wallis, 37 Llantwit Road, Treforest, Glamorgan: WORLD WITHOUT WAR—FOR MOMENT—BUT FERMENT—! £7: L. Norman, c/o Harrison, 10 Hurn Way, Christchurch, Hants: WITH NOBODY TO ASK—OR THANK, POOR ATHEIST! £6: C. Curtis, Castlemaine, Horsmonden, Kent: A PROPER PEACE—"SUMMER"—*Without* THOSE "BUTTERFLIES"! £5: P. H. Lisk, 19A Palmersfield Road, Banstead, Surrey: DIGGING, HOEING, WEEDING—AND *Sneering*—JONES'S MACHINE! £5: Mrs. E. M. Oxley, "Broomside," Bryning-fern Lane, Kirkham, Preston: AT CHURCH ON SUNDAY—MY BUTCHER—BUYING FORGIVENESS! £5: J. L. Steel, c/o 22A Stonny Croft, Ashstead, Surrey: WHAT PUBLIC WANTS—WHITEHALL—ECONOMY, ECONOMY, ECONOMY!

For ten winners of £2 10s. see *Bullets Bulletin*. 50 Special Prizes and 1,500 new 2-in-1 Awards have also been posted.

RULES 1. First Prize for best Bullet received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.
2. Editor undertakes that all Bullets received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent adjudicators.
3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. at the rate of 6d. per Bullet. Fee submitted will be taken to cover Bullets in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. Make P.O. payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated.
4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that result of this Contest (in JOHN BULL dated June 22), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.
(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, June 8, for early news of No. 2,091 result.)

POST ENTRY
Bullets 2,091, "John Bull," Long Acre, London, W.C.99

New, Easy Way to Relieve

HAEMORRHOIDS

with tablets you take like aspirins

Nothing else to use

A Londoner wanted to be free from haemorrhoids "for at least a while"—so he bought his first packet of Hemotabs. Now he writes:

". . . with the idea of being free from haemorrhoids for at least a while, I bought a packet of your tablets . . . The trouble cleared up immediately, and I have had no recurrence since then."—F.J.

Hemotabs are an entirely new treatment for haemorrhoids. You take these tablets with a glass of water—like an aspirin, Hemotabs are clean and simple to take. No other treatment required — no ointments — no unpleasantness. Carried through the body to the seat of the trouble, Hemotabs reduce the swellings, help restore normal actions and promote healing. At all chemists, 2/7d. **Write for free descriptive booklet to: Dept. J.B.13, Griffiths Hughes Ltd., P.O. Box 407, Manchester.**

HEMOTABS

YOUR SPOTS go in a few days

A new balm heals complaints like spots, pimples, rashes — leaves your skin clear, healthy.

Skin troubles like eczema, spots, and rashes don't heal unless you get at their cause — germs beneath your skin. Valderma, because it contains TWO antiseptics, kills off all the germs causing common skin troubles. And now Valderma contains amazing C12. Knits up damaged skin — ensures *faster* healing.

Try this simple 5-day test on *your* skin. Rub Valderma Balm on the trouble several times daily. Within five days you will see the difference Valderma Balm makes. Irritation quickly goes. Often in a few days your skin will be clear, healthy.

Valderma Balm is white, non-greasy and has no "medicinal" smell. At chemists, tubes 2s. 0d., jars 2s. 6d.

After Valderma Balm has cleared your skin, keep it beautifully healthy by regular use of Valderma antiseptic Soap.

Choose GOBLIN and you buy the BEST!

VACUUM CLEANERS
WASHING MACHINES
and Teasmade

FREE Ask your dealer for the 'Goblin Book' of washing machines, vacuum cleaners and Goblin 'Teasmade', or write—**Dept. J.B., Goblin Works, Leatherhead, Surrey.**

PUT GLAMOUR in GREY AND GREYING HAIR

Smoke COLOUR RINSE

Gives a youthful sheen in any shade of glamorous *natural* grey (no blue or mauve). A "Simple to brush-on" rinse—no staining or dyeing of hair, scalp or clothes.

5/6 per bottle (Several applications)

MEN like Smoke
It's so natural-looking. Ask your husband to try it.

A Harlene PRODUCT
From Chemists, Hairdressers and Stores

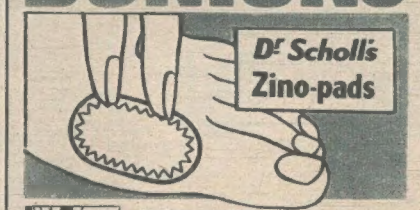
DOWN IN THE DUMPS?

Tired of everyone and everything? Can't stand noise? Sleeping badly? No need to despair—for tomorrow you can be "on top of the world!" Chloro-Yeast—a most successful compound of fine activating Yeast as well as several other proven medicinals—gives you new energy and appetite, steady nerves, relief from tense anxiety-feeling, headaches, colds, disturbed sleep, etc. Chloro-Yeast supplies what is needed to make you quickly feel in top form. By taking this Pep-up tonic for a few days you can be sure of energy, fitness, grand, calm sleep, healthy systemic regularity—all leading to worthwhile and tranquil living. Of chemists, in three sizes. 2/3d., 3/9d. and 9/6d. Economy Size.

Feel Better FAST—with

Chloro-Yeast

BUNIONS



For Corns

For Callouses

For Soft Corns

PUT ONE ON . . . THE PAIN'S GONE

Bunions! You can have instant relief from pain. Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads—bring soothing comfort to millions every day. Your bunion will be protected from shoe friction—safely cushioned from pressure, easily, quickly and surely. Sizes also for corns, callouses and soft corns between the toes. Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads 1/1d. and 2/-. packet. From chemists, shoe dealers, stores and Scholl branches.

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tells you it's doing you good!

THAT S.R. TINGLE IS THE PROOF!

Proof SR is actively caring for your teeth and gums. You can feel it doing you good. You can feel it tingling on your gums — that's the proof SR's Sodium Ricinoleate is protecting your whole mouth.

So night and morning brush teeth and gums with tingling-fresh Gibbs SR. Your mouth will be as fresh as only SR can make it. But more than that — your teeth and gums will be healthy too!

Gibbs SR — the *only* toothpaste you can feel doing you good.

S.R. is good for teeth and gums

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